

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin's Words

Emphasizing Yinning & Yanging BY JUSTIN STONE

At a recent T'ai Chi Chih retreat I attended, I noticed that the attendees, both teachers and students, were not performing the necessary yinning and yanging correctly. Therefore, I suggest that teachers do the following:

Tell students that TCC is performed primarily *below the waist*. Practically all beginning students concentrate on what their arms and hands are doing. Once they have learned how to flow softly, attention should be paid to shifting their weight to *bent* knees, while stiffening the other leg at the same time. The shifting of the weight is one of the most important points of TCC.

Another point to make has to do with spreading the fingers: students should not press their fingers together.

In Carry The Ball To The Side and several other movements, the emphasis is on the wrists and fingers, which are very loose. It is a wrist and finger movement, not a rigid arm movement.

These are just a few of the important points that must be emphasized with beginning students. They are also good for teachers to know for their own practice.

Good teachers make these points very early in the game. It is necessary that the students are taught the above very quickly.



From the Editor

SHARING THE NEW WEBSITE

You've sent some great feedback about the new taichichih.org site. Thanks and keep it coming. At the upcoming Bay Area conference, a supply of promotional postcards for the site will be available. The postcard is an easy and attractive way to spread the word about TCC. Those not attending and wanting a supply of postcards should send a check (payable and mailed to *The Vital Force*) for \$3 to cover postage.



www.taichichih.org

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

PRESS KIT & BROCHURES

Under the web site's hidden community resources page (contact Lorraine Lepine in Kansas if you have forgotten to bookmark it), I have posted seven Word files from the Good Karma press kit presented at the 2006 conference. Feel free to download them and use the press releases verbatim (after inserting your own contact information). With Pete Gregory's permission, I have posted a pdf of the brochure he designed to promote his classes. I encourage others to send fine examples of their brochures to be posted and shared with the community.

GRAPHICS USAGE

The graphics from the taichichih.org web site are copyrighted by *The Vital Force* and are not for use by others. To allow that would imply that there is some organizing body for TCC that confers an imprimatur of authority. But there is not.

STUDENTS WRITING

It is with honor that *The Vital Force* has received so many wonderful testimonial stories from students. As a result of this sharing, one teacher (whose students have shared their stories) has written to *The Vital Force*, "Thank you for the opportunity to know my students. I had no idea. The lives we touch, the feeling of new life that our students experience is beyond what I had known. When I teach, I am not myself. Something else comes through me and happens. It is good to know that."

CHANGE IN SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

A couple of years ago, *The Vital Force* subscription price was reduced from a longstanding annual price of \$40 to \$30. But costs have risen and it is time to reinstate the \$40 annual price. The fee also includes designing and maintaining the new web site. We hope you agree they're worth their weight in gold.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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Submission Guidelines

When thinking about submissions, it's good to keep in mind that a 1/4 page in this newsletter is about 200 words and a 1/2 page is 400 words. Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. Look at the page headings and tailor your submission to a particular section. The newsletter will hang together better that way.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send as high resolution jpgs as your camera takes. The Editor will crop and edit them. If you have 8-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in black and white – please submit them. They might be featured in an entire issue.

The Vital Force reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

Deadlines & Ideas

SUBMISSION DEADLINE	PUBLICATION DATE	THEME	MOVEMENT (TEACHING TIPS)
July 1	Early Aug	Service	Daughter On The Mountaintop
Oct 1	Early Nov	Freedom	Daughter In The Valley
Jan 1	Early Feb	Sharing	Carry The Ball To The Side
April 1	Early May	Clarity	Push Pull

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Neither Battered Nor Elated

By BILL MOORE, CLIFTON, NJ

Justin Stone advises that, as we proceed with regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih movements, we may be surprised at unanticipated benefits. Those who enjoy regular TCC practice often attest to a "carry over" of TCC principles into their daily lives. As our practice matures, we may meet life's challenges with more equanimity and understanding.

The softness and continuity encouraged in the movements find their way into our social conditions, so that we no longer meet life's hurdles by following habit patterns that regularly caused feelings of frustration and disappointment.

As a cork floats on the sea, softly flowing with the highs and lows of the waves, we come to appreciate more readily the ebb and flow of things, being neither severely battered (as the "mighty oak") by life's tougher challenges, nor overly elated by our good fortunes and recognition. We find that by loosening the physical, mental, and emotional gripping in our TCC practice, it enhances our flexibility in social interactions. We likely become more pliable and less resolute (as with the proverbial bamboo).

As our TCC practice progresses, we appreciate letting go to a deeper degree, and this loosening of expectations may have parallels in our lives. We become less attached to these expectations; effectively, we abandon hope in the sense that we are less inclined to set ourselves up for letdowns.

As we experience the release of tensions (and the recycling of this tension into available energy?) in our practice, we recognize that there is great potential for peace in body, mind and spirit. We may then understand that we can experience the same results in our outer lives, by loosening our grip on the results of our actions.

So, let us continue to practice TCC on a regular basis and experience the freedom of letting go in our practice and in our lives. As guru Swami Satchidananda was fond of saying, "Do not make appointments and you will not risk being dis-appointed." This does not mean to abandon making plans, of course, but as we appreciate from our TCC practice, it means to abandon attachment to results.



Released To Cherish Every Moment

By SUSAN WEBER, NAPERVILLE, IL

The first thing I had to do in order to write this article was to abandon hope! I struggle to dig deeply to grasp thoughts, crystallize ideas, and then express them. Given my strong habit energy to avoid writing, I felt immediate tension at writing anything for *The Vital Force*. Fortunately, the theme encouraged me to start by relinquishing expectations, resistance, and tension so I could open myself to what might emerge. Once I released myself, I was flooded with examples of abandoning hope and began to appreciate how much letting go enriches life.

tendrils of
peace and
serenity
seep in
and swirl
through
me

My older son was born with a myriad of medical issues to overcome. By focusing on the present moment and the reality of his current situation, my son was truly engaged in life as a kind, happy, loving boy. Recently watching videos of him from that time, I marveled at his joyful spirit and think of Justin's words in *Abandon Hope*, "to know, with gratitude, the Joy of Being." My father was also living with Alzheimer's disease. And by abandoning both past and future, I immersed myself in my father's reality to fully connect with him. Although he became a different person, I could still sense his essence. We were able to forge a new bond and "live the beauty of the present" (as Justin writes in *Abandon Hope*).

I credit T'ai Chi Chih with facilitating my process of breaking free. TCC has helped me enormously, especially with one of my personal bugaboos – time. At my teacher training, I shared that a big benefit of TCC for me was "expanding time." No longer was there a clock in my head exerting pressure to do more today to be ready for tomorrow. Letting go of my focus on time released me to cherish every moment and be grateful for the glorious value of *now*. The TCC movements and the resulting connection with the universe infused in me a desire to be more fully present. Initially it was in my practice; then it gradually flowed over into my life. During TCC practice these days, I feel the tendrils of peace and serenity seep in and swirl through me, expanding in ripples so that peace and gratitude replace that clock in my head.

The Way To Fulfillment

By PAULINE QUIMSON-TONG, CHAMA, NM

“Abandon Hope, all ye who enter here!” *
I grew up believing that if I had nothing to hope for, then life was not worth living. As I hoped for better things to happen, for more dreams to be fulfilled, I became more unhappy and discontented.

“How we cling to the very things that cause our suffering! They are what is closest to us, and we are afraid that, if we let go, we will have nothing!” *

The moment I started to let go of my traumatic experiences and release my worries of the future – to dump an accumulated lifetime of garbage – I started to have freedom. I started to uncover the beauty and wisdom springing from within. I found that the treasure I had been seeking outside was actually at the center of my being. True love was inside me all along.

“Abandon Hope... it is the way to wake up and come to life.” *

From the first moment that I practiced T'ai Chi Chih (with the PBS video by my teacher Carmen Brocklehurst), I knew I had found the most precious gift. Finally, I had found what I had been searching for – the passion and purpose for the rest of my life. To learn, practice, and finally to live and teach TCC to everyone I come across.

“Abandon Hope... to live the beauty of the present and to know, with gratitude, the Joy of Being.” *

I have been transformed immensely with TCC, *Seijaku*, and the Nei Kung. I was a medical doctor with countless degrees, yet I was unfulfilled. I was sickly, weak, depressed, full of anxiety, worry, anger, fear, resentment; I was carrying the burdens of the past, present, and future. Then, I learned to empty myself, to start with nothing, to release and let

go of everything. Like a caterpillar cocooned until it becomes a butterfly, I am becoming joyful, peaceful, calm, loving, courageous, and healthy. I used to always want to run, hide, escape. But walling myself off and being numb, neither did I feel love. Now, I am rooted in the soles of my feet. I am becoming centered and eager to discover more of my true self within. I never knew that I had so much life and beauty inside. It's wonderful to see myself blossom with this flowing fountain of Joy. Not because I have everything, but because I desire nothing.

“Only by abandoning hope for the future can we know life in the present.” *

Each time I let go of wants, I realize that the present moment is wonderful. Leading with the T'an Tien (flowing from the center, with softness, circularity and continuity) has spilled into daily life. What a joy to have no regrets of the past, no worries of the future.

In my life, I have discovered and continue to unfold the truth that, *“From the state of emptiness, each man's [my] body is a body pervading the universe. His [my] voice is a voice filling the universe. His [my] life is a life which is without limit.”* (from the *Lotus Sutra*, as quoted in *Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih*)

* from *ABANDON HOPE! The Way to Fulfillment*, by Justin F. Stone



The Audacity Of (Abandoning) Hope

By PETE GREGORY, CROWN POINT, IN

I often hear T'ai Chi Chih teachers allude to an approaching threshold in our history that will bring explosive growth and demand for beginner's classes. Perhaps it will come from a promising study, or some upgraded GKP materials, or from projections made by Justin. Sometimes a teacher may come away from a TCC event so exhilarated they can't refrain from building castles in the air.

I'm no different. I've had visions of Kim Grant driving a forklift around a GKP warehouse while Carmen Brocklehurst's TV series is broadcast on PBS everywhere (again and again). I've imagined a wall-size map with pushpins indicating TCC studios across the landscape. My daydreaming has not materialized. More importantly, it hasn't yielded any new classes.

One day, the momentum shifted away from high-falutin' to practical when I put together a really good brochure. I distributed over 100 of them locally, and mailed some to Justin and a short list of teachers. The response was extreme. At home: extreme silence, no classes, few demos. Crickets. With teachers: extreme enthusiasm, so much so that many felt the brochure should be packaged and sold to teachers at the conference.

I want to be a busy and sought after teacher. Getting involved in a brochure project, or any other distraction of power, authority, or profit outside the classroom will only take me back to the land of pushpins and forklifts. Therefore, I'm letting it go. Margaret Mead perhaps said it best: "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens could change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

A Year Of Abandoning Hope

By MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, CO

If last year had a theme, it would have been abandon hope. Last spring we sold our Minnesota house, packed up our boys, and moved to Colorado. We say we moved for family reasons but it was really the hands of *Chi* gently guiding us and telling us that it was time for change. I have learned to listen to those hands over the years even if I do not know all the whys. When we moved to Minnesota without knowing anyone, we quickly developed a loving network of friends that felt like family. I started practicing T'ai Chi Chih soon afterward and became a part of an embracing TCC community. Looking back, it felt like a nurturing womb. But even the most nurturing of wombs cannot hold onto the child forever. Growth and change are the nature of life.

*release
attachment
to an outer
home and
sink deeper
into my
inner home*

The first year in Colorado has been a year of labor pains. We lived in my sister's basement for three months. I abandoned hope in the comfort and security of my own home and space. I was called to release attachment to an outer home and sink deeper into my inner home. My husband soon found out it would take eight months to find a job. I abandoned hope in feeling secure financially. I was called to release the need to know how and when it would all work out. I was called to deepen my trust in a universe that loves and supports us.

Internally, the ground as I knew it is gone. I feel lost, not really knowing exactly who I am anymore. I am abandoning hope in things I have long identified with because they all seem empty and flat now. I am being called to release into the raw present moment, to simply notice and be with what arises. Compassion and acceptance is the ground that nurtures me now. My labor is not yet over but I know the light of birth will come.

Chi calls for growth. It is the nature of life. My daily TCC practice has taught me to be open to this growth, to trust in the process, be willing to abandon hope in the old, and release into the new. I am grateful.

Released, It Arrived

By TINA WELLS, OXFORD, UK

I had to abandon the hope of ever giving birth. We'd had four unsuccessful in vitro fertilization attempts, and my ability to survive the disappointment was based on detaching myself from the emotional longing for a child. I tried to view the medical intervention as a technical procedure. But it was not quite so easy to let go of hoping that I would be a mum some day. Gradually, I understood that the doctors could only assist to a certain point. After that it depended on the life force in the embryos to determine whether a baby would develop. I was surprised that the medical staff encouraged me to hope during those attempts. I intuitively knew that attachment to a desired outcome could only bring sadness if the outcome wasn't what I'd hoped.

During our fifth attempt, I talked to a clinical psychologist to ask how people let go of the desire to have a family and leave IVF attempts behind. She explained that maybe we needed to grieve for the lost embryos. (In my detachment I had buried my emotion in order to lessen the blow of failed attempts.) Then we had to let go of trying any longer. We agreed that if this final attempt didn't work, we would go to the Lake District and plant a tree in memory of the idea of becoming parents.

Unbeknownst to us at the time, our son's life was taking hold. We still think about planting a tree in gratitude to Jamie for being a strong enough life force to come into this world regardless of whether we hoped for him or not. My T'ai Chi Chih practice is deepening my belief that true peace is achieved when we decide to no longer cling to desires and illusions of total happiness. Learning to go with the flow and accept the twists and turns in life is making my ride smoother.



Serenity

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF, North Plainfield, NJ

[Talk given at the New Jersey T'ai Chi Chih Conference – 2007]

In his opening words in the *T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text*, between the Chinese brush painting of cherries by Ou Mie Shu and the Tao symbol with explanation of yin and yang, Justin shares the possibility of dwelling in the experience of serenity. He ends with, "This serenity should spill over into our everyday lives, making possible a calm and joyous interior even during the most hectic times."

I believe that each of you has experienced this serenity, otherwise you would not be here, nor would you be teaching. Some other descriptive words and experiences for serenity may be centered, peaceful, an inner calm, tranquility. It has been my experience that I do not always maintain that constant peaceful state. There are times when my serenity is thrown off center, and I know it. Overall, there is tranquility at my deepest core. In meeting with teachers, they often ask how I am doing, and they ask that with deep concern. When I respond that "Things are going very well," then their expression becomes even more quizzical, to which I responded, "Maybe I'm missing something?"

Even in the midst of turmoil we can dip into that well of inner serenity. We are not always aware of that accumulated serenity! Do you ever respond to something and know that response isn't your usual one? It's no secret that there is a lot of road rage on our major highways and local streets. How do you, how do I, respond to this outer chaos? Can we simply allow people to go ahead in serenity, rather than reacting with road rage. We can surprise ourselves with another response that is not the usual way. Where does that response come from?

When I was making my silent-directed retreat last summer, I would practice the entire TCC form twice a day – what a luxury! At this retreat house there is a set of steps to the ocean. After my practice that very first morning on my way from the ocean to the retreat house, a retreatant sat at the top of the staircase taking in the ocean view. She also took up most of the space needed to get by. I

immediately thought, "Does she think she owns these steps?" ... which left me steaming for a few minutes. The next morning after TCC practice there she was again, only now she was standing at the top of the steps – with even less space for me to pass by. This time it dawned on me, "She must think I am skinny enough to get past her in that small space!" Probably neither of these thought patterns are correct, but I much prefer the second to the first response.

I invite you to read Justin's words in *Spiritual Odyssey* (pg. 49). He often speaks of the "reciprocal character of Mind and *Chi*" (or *Prana* in Sanskrit). He ends this by saying, "Ultimately we are what we think; this creates our Karma." And on page 69, Justin makes a bold statement, "Remake your *Chi* and remake yourself." We can only allow this to happen by regular TCC practice. "But that practice must be done softly and continuously, preferably at a slow pace," as Justin says in the *T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text* (pg. 21).



How do we drop the "I" in TCC practice? These reflections began with a quotation from the *T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text* in which Justin uses the words "measured movements" when referring to the serenity which develops with our practice. When talking about the six principles of movement in the TCC form, we never talk about "measured movements" as such, so I'd invite us to consider what

they may be. The move originates in the T'an T'ien with wrists, not arms, creating circular patterns, moving slowly, allowing the hands and weight shift to be synchronized. There is only softness and continuity. There is no "I."

"I" only enters into the experience when there is a desire to control. Control makes us try too hard. Control creates tension. Control demands ego.

Can we be completely dead to "self" in our practice of TCC? I believe we can, and when this happens, we sink into the essence of the form. And so no one is doing TCC. It is doing itself. No self, no ego, nothing, nada. TCC in this experience becomes a moving meditation. We can practice TCC and have the deepest spiritual effect on ourselves. Justin's statement from *Spiritual Odyssey* says it all, "You can chase your shadow all day and never catch it, but stand still at noon and it will merge with the body – no effort." (pg. 87).

Relationships

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

We all have relationships with family, friends, and professional colleagues. If we value our relationships we nurture them. We work at them; we spend time developing them. Often we take them for granted until a crisis occurs. Only then does it become apparent how important they are and that we need to take an active part in maintaining them.

*Give yourself
to your
TCC practice
and
it gives to you*

As we learn and practice T'ai Chi Chih we begin another relationship. We will each develop our own personal connection to the form. As we give time and focus to the practice of TCC, it gives back to us in ways specific to our needs. A give and give (rather than give and take) bond is formed. Give yourself to your TCC practice and it gives to you.

Many times at TCC teacher training courses I have witnessed the power of that give-give relationship. Candidates come to a course and leave behind aspects of their lives that often define them – work, family, responsibilities, friends. For that week candidates are not saddled with worldly expectations and are able to be present in their true nature. They are able to connect more deeply with their TCC practice because they have let go of their armor, their life's baggage. Their focus is clear. When TCC practice is approached with such openness it allows us to peel away more layers – to feel, touch, and experience the true essence of who we are. Receiving glimpses of our true nature is a life-altering gift.

We don't need to go to a teacher training course to have a deep experience with TCC. We need only approach our practice with openness and focus. If we look at our practice as a relationship we treasure, we will respect and honor it, not taking it for granted. We will never do a careless TCC practice. We will practice mindfully, whether it be a 20-minute or a 50-minute practice. When we nurture and work at our practice by becoming softer, flowing effortlessly, grounding, and generally applying the principles mindfully (with feeling-awareness rather than a calculating mind), we are strengthening our relationship with our TCC practice. As we give ourselves to our practice the blessings we receive are boundless. The joy is endless.

Release & Let Go

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

The spring equinox is a good time to set intentions for what we most want to create for the year. This spring I set intentions around letting go of anything that no longer served the highest good. In a burst of spring housecleaning, I consciously cleaned out closets, drawers and desks, letting go of clutter and things I no longer used.

Apparently I wasn't thorough enough. I had occasion to release some additional things when a burglar left with most of my jewelry. It was surprisingly easy to let go of possessions that used to be very dear to me. More difficult was releasing my beloved cat, Claire, who disappeared that day.

In T'ai Chi Chih we are reminded to let go of tensions (so that we flow softly) and of thoughts (so that the mind becomes still). Justin has often said that softness means letting go. In *Seijaku*, the advanced form of TCC, it is even more important to completely let go of all muscular effort as we return to absolute softness. This lesson of releasing has many applications in our daily lives.

I am so grateful for my TCC and *Seijaku* practice. They have served me well over so many years. They are keepers.



Learning Bass Drum

By SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

At Carmen Brocklehurst's March, 2008 Retreat in Albuquerque, I heard Justin say, "A teacher must teach by demonstration not by 6,000 words." So the first thing I do for my students is demonstrate the movement. I ask the class to recall the bass drum in their high school marching band so that they visualize their fingertips tracing the rim of a vertical drum. I point out that our drum is *not too big* (in other words, the hands stay close to the body and go no lower than the T'an T'ien) and that Bass Drum is *primarily a wrist movement*.

We begin with the hands. Palms face each other; we keep them apart about the distance of the crease in your pants, with fingers spread. We discuss polarity and feeling the *Chi* between the hands. It is important that the hands not be stiff or too bent. There is a slight cupping of the hands. To demonstrate the amount of cupping, I have the student place one hand gently on a table and then lift it up. That's it.

Fingers, which start about half way between straight up and parallel to the floor, begin moving down the front of the body. When hands get to the waist the *wrists completely let go*. When the hands continue around the circle and as they begin to come over the top of the circle (4 o'clock), *roll the fingers back*. Notice that the skin will be creased slightly at the wrist.

Then we focus on the legs and the importance of keeping concentration in the soles of the feet. Of special importance: the T'an T'ien leads. If the hands are moving and the legs are not, it is a hollow movement. Let the engine do the work as the weight is shifted completely on bent knees. Remember the back heel only comes up *about an inch*. If it's more than that, the upper body is thrown forward.

In Bass Drum, it is *as if the wrists are making the circle*. Encourage your students to flow softly, feel the energy between the palms of their hands, and smile. Practice, practice, practice and the *Chi* will teach the rest.

On a personal note: My understanding and the teaching of Bass Drum and T'ai Chi Chih is much improved after attending Carmen's last two retreats. My students agree. Thank you Carmen and Justin.



A Watershed Moment With Bass Drum

By JIM EAGLE, SALINAS, CA

Accessibility is not one of the principles of T'ai Chi Chih, but to my mind it's a critical characteristic. If TCC were not accessible to beginners, many fewer students would continue past the first lessons. Its accessibility is part of its genius and inspiration.

Bass Drum is accessible. The leg and arm motions coordinate naturally. So it's important to take advantage of this by presenting it early to students. But Bass Drum has more to offer. It can introduce us to the T'an T'ien and its role in synchronizing the upper and lower body movement. At least that's the way it happened to me.

Last year, during the two months before my teacher accreditation, I was struggling to fully shift the weight forward. The problem was a lack of hip flexibility. I couldn't fully load the front leg without leaning forward, extending the knee beyond the front foot and lifting the rear heel, before the rear leg was straight. Doing many TCC repetitions, and concentrating on upper and lower body synchronization in Bass Drum, eventually unlocked the hips and got me back on track. (The patient instruction of Jerry Bumbalough and Athene Mantle also helped.)

So what is being synchronized? As the hands approach the most-forward, 3 o'clock position, the hips continue to move forward. The front leg becomes full and the knee is bent; the back leg becomes empty, unweighted, and straight; and the back heel begins to peel off the floor. The circular, forward motion of the hands helps keep the hips moving forward. Keeping the back heel down until the back leg is straight encourages hip and groin flexibility.

For such an accessible movement, it turns out there really was a lot going on! No wonder I was having trouble. But eventually I began to feel just a bit more hip movement. It was, however, an important bit. While practicing Bass Drum one morning, completely unexpectedly, I heard the T'an T'ien say, "Hello, Jim. I am your center!" That was a watershed moment. T'an T'ien awareness then rippled through all the movements and brought my practice, I believe, to a new level.

At the time I thought, "So this is what 'Joy Through Movement' means." I still do.

Abandoning With Bass Drum

EV HANSON-FLORIN, SIDLESHAM, WEST SUSSEX, UK

This movement allows a feeling of abandonment, as if being immersed into a warm bath. Using the forward/backward foot movement and the relaxed but upright spine learned in the preceding two movements, Bass Drum allows relaxation while tracing the form of a water wheel or bass drum in front of you.

Start with the palms facing each other about 10-12 inches apart, fingers slightly separated from each other at about chest level. Move the hands down the front of the torso with the forward weight shift and trace the form of a bass drum or water wheel away from the body. Rotate the wrists upward and back to the chest with the backward weight shift.

Since bass drums are not common in the UK, "Water Wheel" has become the colloquial movement name here. This explanation comes from a student, Anwyl Allisstone, who felt as if she was being immersed in a warm bath.

Editor's Note: Please retain the official name of the movements while acknowledging colloquial differences and imagery.

Closing With Bass Drum

BY STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPEO, MS

Without moments of silence separating individual words, there could be no speech. All vocal attempts to communicate would be chaotic and meaningless. So it is with the quietude between our T'ai Chi Chih movements.

I write of a posture so unusual it is referred to by two names. During the pause between the left and right repetitions of a movement [(which is not meant to be as long as the actual close)], it's referred to as a restful position. And at the completion of a movement it is referred to as a graceful conclusion. As we cycle through our TCC movements, this grounding pose allows body and mind to unite in a spirit of calmness. In this sacred, silent center where we become as still as the mountain, anything is possible. We exist briefly as pure potential and then, when our time inside the posture draws to an end, we gather our essence and flow outward in an intentional, purposeful way.

The foundation of all TCC moves is this posture of stillness. For the body to move in the TCC way it must begin each move from a state of profound stillness and it must end every movement with a return to that stillness. Honor your students. Do not allow them to hurry through these times of stillness. Hold the posture.

Feeling Bass Drum

BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Again, begin by feeling the energy between the hands. The movement starts with fingers pointing softly upward – "about a foot apart," says Justin. The movement is initiated by the wrists – the hands softly coming down to the T'an T'ien (not below it). The *Chi* is always there. How do you access it? What is happening between the hands – can you feel it bouncing back and forth? What do you feel in your T'an T'ien? "Circles," answers a retreatant, "Life is complete. It does what it needs to be doing." Note that at 4 o'clock (if the clock were now facing out to the side in a plane perpendicular to the floor), the hands begin rolling over the top of the drum. If the hands begin rolling towards the body at 4 o'clock, this will assure that the hands don't come up too high. Note the inner feeling and possibility of complete release in the arms *just before* the 4 o'clock point.



Double Lung Transplant & TCC Team Up, Giving New Life

By GARY SWANSON, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

My name is Gary Swanson. My T'ai Chi Chih story begins in 1985 when I was 33 years old. I had a wife, a house, three young daughters . . . and I was going to die. I was diagnosed with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. It's a lung disease. It's debilitating, hereditary, and fatal. The doctors gave me ten years to live.

The diagnosis scared me, depressed me, but it did not defeat me. I decided that if I was going to die, I was going to die fighting. I developed this battle plan: exercise daily, eat nutritionally, create and then maintain a positive frame of mind, document my journey in poems, and focus on life not death.

My battle plan kept me alive long enough to receive a double lung transplant in December 2000. It was after my double lung transplant that I discovered TCC.

Meditation always interested me so TCC's moving meditation description piqued my interest. I enrolled in a TCC course at a local high school. Donna McElhose, an accredited TCC teacher, was my teacher. Donna taught me the TCC moves, pose, and principles, but she also inspired in me a desire to learn, a desire that still burns today.

Since beginning TCC my blood pressure is down, my pulse rate is down, my anxiety level is down, and my lung capacity is up. Not a bad combination.

Each morning I do a full TCC practice, and throughout the day, as needed, I pause to do abbreviated practices. I now study under the guidance of two accredited teachers, Donna and Lisa Jacobs. My hope is become an accredited TCC teacher so I can guide others as my teachers have guided me.

Editor's Note: Donna McElhose adds: I have known Gary for three years but did not know he was thinking of becoming a teacher until now. His life is an inspiration; he's always joyful. He used to play the harmonica when he was coming to class, but I only recently learned that he played it to keep his lungs healing. After his lung transplant, his lung capacity actually increased instead of decreased.

I Must Admit, I'm Astonished

By CATHY WILLIAMS, GRAYSLAKE, IL

The course description for T'ai Chi Chih caught my eye – "profound effects on the body and mind."

Although I knew nothing about TCC, it sounded perfect since last year had been one of sorrow. I lost my only sister to breast cancer. The time spent as a caregiver had taken a toll; for months after her death all I did was sleep and chain smoke. Thinking about Rose embracing and clinging to life, I was ashamed I was throwing it away but I was almost helpless to do anything about it. I felt paralyzed; my energy was non-existent. Obviously I needed to make some major changes; I needed a "profound effect on body and mind."

*Yoga I could understand.
Martial arts I could understand.
But TCC?*

So that's how I came to take a TCC course. Quite honestly, after the first class, I couldn't imagine how this could possibly produce the benefits it claimed. Yoga I could understand. Martial arts I could understand. But TCC? I just couldn't understand it. How could these simple movements increase my energy level or promote inner peace? I felt awkward and clumsy at first. I couldn't possibly be doing it right. Nevertheless I practiced faithfully every day and after seven weeks, I must admit, I'm astonished. While I still have so much to learn, the practice calms my mind. I have no problem focusing. It truly is a moving meditation for me.

Practicing daily is no problem. I look forward to it because I know I'll feel much better afterwards. Before I'm finished with Rocking Motion, all the chattering in my brain has ceased. I'm moving in the moment with no past regrets or future fears. I'm amazed and thrilled every time I feel the energy flowing through my fingers. I know that TCC will be a lifelong practice for me.

I also quit smoking the first day of class. I've quit many times before but it never lasted more than a few days. It has been seven weeks now. I know this is the last time I will have to quit. During Cosmic Consciousness Pose, my thoughts of gratitude are always the same: Thank you for another day of not smoking, another day of breath, another day of life.



The Journey Begins

By JANIS GORSKI, GRAYSLAKE, IL

There it is again in my mailbox, the familiar catalog from the local junior college. Perhaps this year I will actually take something. The pages are more like newspaper than a glossy magazine, not very inviting, but I peak inside anyway. The journey

I practiced that first week, something started – an inner reflection began

I'm undertaking this year – to change my life – requires me to try new things, to reach beyond what's normal, and to scratch out the essence of me.

As a creative person who works in the textile medium, I'm always finding reasons not to create. My daughter needs a new dress for a dance; the laundry has reached Def-Con 4. Anything will do when you feel blocked. I knew I needed help. Springtime helps us to begin again. What courses to take? Sketching, yes. Fabric dyeing, absolutely. And perhaps something out of my range: T'ai Chi Chih. I

had a vague recollection of people doing something in unison in a park on a summer day. Maybe this can help me unearth who I am.

Our teacher embodies the passion and skill to teach. The T-shirts she wears from conferences and retreats are a testament. She has a calm and accommodating persona, soft movements, and a wonderful twinkle in her eye. She wants us all to succeed, to get it.

Class begins: move your body, soften your knees, just breathe. The first night I felt like I was run over by a truck. How could that be? We weren't doing aerobics or calisthenics. The next morning was better, and as I practiced that first week, something started – an inner reflection began. A small span of time began. A calmness began. An ability to just be in my own mind began. Over the next few weeks, moving became easier then more difficult. Then I noticed I was sleeping soundly each night. That hadn't happened in months. I began to feel more balanced in my gait. I began to feel the slightest tremble in my fingers, the heat of polarity, and the balance in Cosmic Consciousness.

This week, six weeks into the term, was our first test. I knew the material but woke up with a headache and nausea. I went to class thinking I might have to leave early, but we formed a circle and practiced a bit before the test. My headache and nausea disappeared. Could balancing and circulating my energy really make me feel better? It did! My journey has only just begun.

T'ai Chi Chih & Me

By TONY BOTTING, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

I have always tried to remain active with many sports, but as I aged I began to suffer from arthritis in my feet and knees. As the deterioration progressed, my lifestyle became increasingly sedentary. Recently, I was told that I needed full knee replacements, but I wasn't quite ready to take that step.

I'd heard about T'ai Chi Chih from friends who practiced it, and I'd also come across some articles on the subject. But I'd never really looked into it seriously. It remained filed in the back of my mind for "someday when I have time." I signed up for a beginner's class without any preconceived notions or expectations but with a sense of curiosity and the hope that it might somehow prove beneficial.

That was six weeks ago and I am still very much the novice. But in this short period of time I have developed an enjoyment in the simplicity of the movements. At first it was difficult to remain standing for any extended period of time. I could not take all the weight on my right leg as I tried to shift my left foot forward. Now I can go through ten movements without having to sit down, my right knee pains me less, and it doesn't buckle when I put my weight on it. I have discovered something I can do without suffering great pain in my feet the next day.



Whether these improvements, or the increased energy and freedom of movement that I experience on a daily basis, are due to TCC or simply because I have become more active again, I don't know. I am inclined to believe it's the former, and I'm well on my way to making TCC an integral part of daily life. I would like to thank my teacher, Donna McElhose, for her understanding and guidance as I embark on this new phase of my life.

Wisdom For Sale

By JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

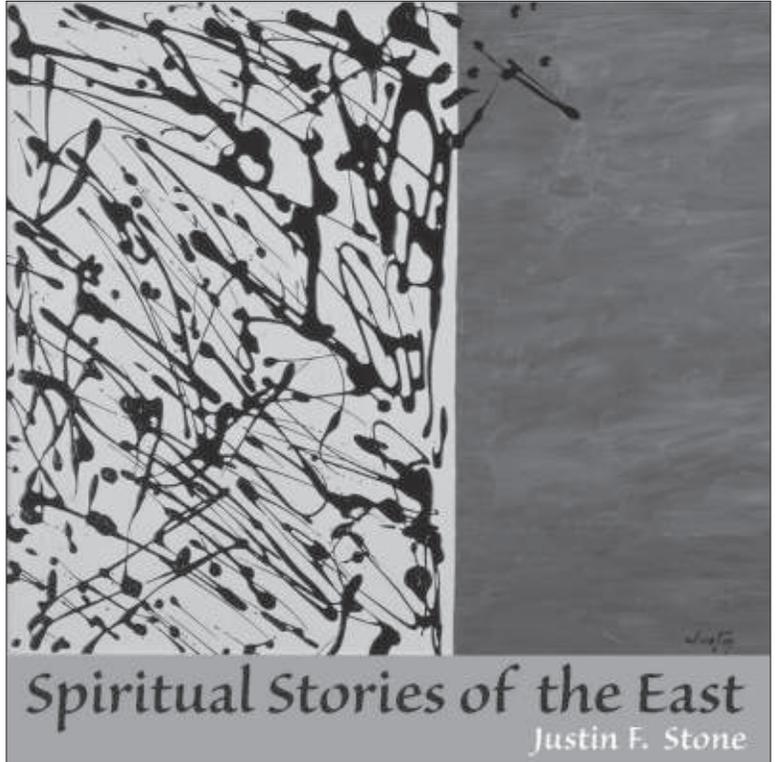
Did you ever wonder what questions Justin Stone asked his teachers? Would you like to hear about Justin's recurring vision after his meditations? Or what is it like to have tea with a real Zen Master? Would you like to know how other spiritual people have answered the question "Who am I?" All this and more can be gleaned from the 2-disk CD *Spiritual Stories of the East*. Justin is a great storyteller and in this CD, he shares his priceless wisdom.

I love listening to Justin tell these wonderful and often humorous stories. I listen to the CD over and over again since the stories have deep meaning and, depending on where I am in my journey, the stories speak differently to me at different times. I'm confident they will touch your heart, make you laugh, cause you to pause and ponder.

People often say they don't have time to reflect, to go within. Think about how much time you spend in your car commuting, though. You could use that time to listen to this CD about Justin's travels and the people whom he has met along the way. He ranges over a wide variety of topics – from Hakuin's enlightenment experience to what he and Paul Reps did while visiting Hawaii.

This CD is great for students and teachers who wonder how to go deeper. And it's perfect for those who want to learn more about Justin, his life, and his travels. Justin delights the listener with thought-provoking tales that will enrich anyone's commute.

If you aren't able to spend Saturday evenings at Justin's home, where he tells and retells many of these stories, this is the next best thing.



A Chinese monk was walking through the streets on a rainy day. Puddles had formed in the streets. Looking down, the monk saw a scorpion slowly drowning in a puddle. Without hesitation, the monk plucked the creature from the water. At which point the scorpion bit him. As soon as the scorpion was placed on the dry street, it promptly went back into the puddle. Seeing the scorpion drowning, the monk once again picked up the scorpion, which bit him a second time. A passerby seeing this little drama walked up to the monk and said, "You fool, don't you know each time you pick up the scorpion it will bite you?" "As a matter of fact," answered the monk, "I do know it. It is in the scorpion's nature to bite me. But I also know it is my nature to keep pulling him out of the water." Know thyself said Jesus, as did other saints.

From *Spiritual Stories of the East* ©2008
Available as a 2-disk CD from Good Karma Publishing

Spirituality

By JUSTIN STONE

[REPRINTED FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, MARCH 2002]

When I write about Spirituality, I am certainly not talking about Religion. The latter brings to mind an institution with dogma and doctrine, ceremonies, belief in a personal God, all sorts of assumptions, and a somewhat fabricated history. Finances often play a large and necessary role. Religion brings great comfort, sometimes with bigotry, to many people.

Spirituality has none of these, and authority plays little part. To me it means an inner search for the Real, the lasting, and the effort to live and accord with that Reality. Sometimes philosophy is mistaken for spirituality, but the former is cerebral and deals with theory only, not actual experience.

T'ai Chi Chih practice has nothing to do with religion. The believer who practices regularly – and correctly – will get the benefits of TCC practice, as will the non-believer who practices the discipline regularly and correctly. Swimming in circulating *Chi*, one could not better accord with Reality. The spiritual person is usually the happy person, but he or she many not be religious.

One can only be a truly guiding teacher of spirituality if he or she has the inner experience of Reality. This is usually accompanied by gratitude, the way to happiness. Where there is sincere gratitude one can experience a fulfilling life. Can money by itself bring this joy? A thousand times “no.”



Flow Softly

By JUSTIN STONE

[REPRINTED FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, DECEMBER 1999]

“Flow softly” should be the first command a teacher gives a new T'ai Chi Chih pupil. Not “move from the hands or feet” and not “try hard – it's exercise,” but “flow softly.” If the student understands that, and tries to do it, there will be no other problems. Even a child can learn how to place the hands and feet.

Softness is important because of the meridian channels, thru which the *Chi* flows. If there is tension or any strain, such as muscular effort, the meridians will contract and the *Chi* will not flow freely.

Correct shifting of the weight, proper yinling and yangling, circularity – these are all important, but they come after the student has learned how to move properly.

If the student, after a few lessons, is not making progress, it is best to tell her or him to forget what has been learned and go back to learning how to move properly. Many teachers have not really learned how to move from the T'an T'ien, and they should be anxious to bring themselves up to par. This can be done by auditing teachers' training courses and coming to the conference, where there is much practice of the fundamentals.

Trying hard causes the student to tense muscles, and this defeats the very purpose of TCC. “The effort of no effort” is a phrase the teacher should remember and frequently use. If the teacher does the movements well, and explains them well, the student will tend to follow in the teacher's footsteps and, over a period of time, gradually sink into the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih.

Editor's Note:

Many of you have said you want “more Justin” in the newsletter. In recognition of the fact that many subscribers are new(ish), and that Justin has written compelling articles for *The Vital Force* since its inception in the mid-1980s, *The Vital Force* will reprint older article(s) that is/are of vital interest to the community of practitioners.

Besides, some things are timeless.

Great Benefits To Teachers & Students

Intensive with Pam (& Antonia) in Ringwood, NJ;
Oct. 5-8, 2007 BY DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOST

This course was very effective for anyone who practices T'ai Chi Chih – to deepen their understanding of the movements and to realize the refinements needed to better embody the principles of how to move and thereby increase the benefits received. Everyone departed with a sense of incredible bonding and a feeling of satisfaction that we had done something good for ourselves and each other – something that will make a lasting difference in our lives. *Comments from participants include:*

“Through softness, continuity, and openness, we channel fulfillment in our practice and in our lives.” ... “I recommend teachers go to intensives whenever possible and encourage their serious students to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity.” ... “I found myself surrounded by a community of *Chi*. It inspires me to continue my exploration of TCC and fills me with gratitude.” ... “I am newly devoted to continuing my daily practice. Its benefits now feel limitless.” ... “As I try to integrate the smaller details discussed, it has become so very clear that *how* you move (from the T'an T'ien) is the basis for all the movements.” ... “Work hard. Play hard. What a wonderful way to sharpen your TCC skills. The intensive is the way.” ... “The instruction keeps me focused in the soles of my feet and brings a new awareness to my own practice and the basic principles. Without a doubt it helps me be a better TCC teacher.” ... “This weekend has increased insights into my goal of becoming a TCC instructor.” ... “Softening my movements made a difference in feeling the *Chi* in a way I had not yet experienced. The visuals and tips shared helped make the movements easier. As a result they were more enjoyable and joyful.”



In Their Words

Teacher Renewal & Training with Sandy (& Antonia)
in Ringwood, NJ; Mar. 1-7, 2008 BY DAN PIENCIAK, HOST

Several candidates from the October intensive experienced challenges that prevented them from attending this training, but we were grateful that Sandy committed to a six-person training. We were also blessed with over a dozen auditing teachers; Thomas Davidson even drove all the way from Michigan for the week. As always, witnessing the transformation of the six new teachers was an inspiration and privilege to all. *Now for their words:*

Any trepidation that tried to hitch a free ride to the accreditation in my baggage found no comfortable accommodations. The feelings of nurturing, support, encouragement, and love pervaded the empty spaces. The opportunities to deepen my exploration of T'ai Chi Chih were filled with the excitement of new discoveries, enriching an already meaningful practice. Holding no expectation of outcomes, I left feeling more blessed than one can imagine – all because of one person, Justin Stone. – JUDY CHANCEY, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The accreditation process was an amazing one of becoming. Like a spring flower, we felt ourselves gradually open during the week – gently, softly, each in our own time with the gentle support of our teachers. – JIM KAIB, PHILADELPHIA, PA

The vast knowledge of teachers who were ready, willing, and able to share with us was amazing. The *teh* [inner sincerity] between students and teachers, sending out love to one another and into the cosmos, was readily apparent. – TONY RISOS, TOMS RIVER, NJ

A new journey started at the Franciscan Center. There I met other practitioners and learned from their experiences (and my own) of being corrected. As a result I became more relaxed during my stay. We were not there as perfect persons, and we were still learning even though we were accredited as teachers. I am now ready to share TCC with others. – AGUS WONG, BETHESDA, MD

This week was enveloped in softness. Despite the loss of my uncle during the first session, everyone's support was a soft place to rest. My favorite kind of environment is one that promotes growth. – KATE VAN FRANK, MONTCLAIR, NJ

I feel transformed. My understanding of yinning and yanging emerged one morning during the practice before breakfast. My right hip, which had been holding tension for years, let go and started moving normally. I could not have gone through this training without participating in an intensive prior to that and working on my practice since then. Thank you for all the teaching.

– EVE DELACHARTRE, BROOKLYN, NYC



Interacting With Source

Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst in Albuquerque, NM; Mar. 13-16, 2008

By DORA DERZON, PARTICIPANT

The group energy of this 29-person retreat was incredibly strong, positive, and sincere. People with experience ranging from two months to 15 years came together to go more deeply than ever in their TCC practices. In addition to Carmen's clear and grounding instruction, Justin demonstrated some TCC movements and talked extensively to us about TCC and the spiritual path. Afterwards, Carmen asked, "What did you gain by being with Justin? And how did Justin's being here affect your TCC practice?" *Below are abbreviated responses by all participants.*

Seeing Justin in the flesh made me feel "it" was possible. ... After being with Justin, I want to do TCC all the time. ... It was like meeting an old friend. I felt a drive to do TCC better. ... Justin made it clear that TCC is a service to humanity. ... I was touched. This man is awesome. His interest is only in improving people's lives. ... I found myself more willing to receive instruction. ... I felt encouragement, connection, a certain peacefulness and goodness. ... Gratitude. I became less mental. I've had some kind of energy shift. ... When he's around, there's a calmness. ... When he walked in, I felt connections to everyone. The energy in the room was so positive. ... I was mesmerized by him, inspired, grounded. Afterwards, my movements were softer, smoother. ... When he moved, the *Chi* was tangible. I stopped thinking. I started feeling the movements. ... When I'm around Justin everything drops away. He's so selfless; he would walk a marathon on one leg to help someone. Afterwards, my TCC felt more selfless. ... He made me want to be more willing to be of service to humanity. ... Justin opens that part of us that we're not willing to open sometimes. There was a lot of sharing – from the Source. I got to interact with the Source. It's beyond special. ... There's an intuitive sense that he knows without words what we need. Afterwards, I had a greater sense of confidence. ... We had talked about feeling the

heavy air but now I could really feel it. ... It reminded me of a day at teacher training when he came into the room. Some thought, "Oh no, he's here." I thought, "I'm so happy he's here!" Whenever Justin is present I feel so loved and accepted. I have always felt him with me. I've been waiting for TCC all my life. ... I feel how much he cares about everyone. It's nice to see him so animated. I now see what you all have seen in him for a long time. ... Today when he came in, I saw the "old Justin," the selfless dedication of a principle; the selfless sharing of good to everybody. ... How can I, a beginner, have such a sense of him as a being. But I do. He was just be-ing. I want my movements to be right, for the *Chi* to flow more. He made me want to move to Albuquerque. I really want to be a teacher. ... I'm still processing what's gone on. ... The whole retreat has felt very Source-ish. ... Each one of us has our own way of understanding it. As Justin says, "TCC will be the healing way for many, many people in the future." ... This was a gift for all of us. ... This has been a really good day, a great day! I've been around Justin a lot, but when he came in here today and got involved, a change happened. There was a shift, an energy change for me. ... This was the happiest day of my life. To learn from Justin while watching him teach such open students in the presence of my own teacher was, as someone said earlier, beyond special!



Flowing Continues In Iceberg Land Intensive with Sandy in St. John's, NL Canada; Mar. 28-30, 2008

BY SHEILA LEONARD, HOST

Awareness, awe, passion, amazement, blessing, and gratitude frame the experience of our intensive. The teaching, modeling, and dedication, along with the group spirit, helped it go beyond all expectations.

The experience was certainly intensive but also transforming and potentially life changing. One student spoke for many, feeling like the tin soldier beginning to *feel* and come to life. Other participant's practices went from "watching from the outside, trying to get it just right" to "flowing from the inside" and sensing the feel of a particular movement. Others learned to focus anew on the soles of the feet and learned anew "sinking, shifting, and preparing" before moving. It was like seeing with new eyes. There was far less thinking and far more feeling.

"Aha" moments abounded, whether working in large or small groups, partnering or sitting in a circle. Sandy's presentation style was easy yet challenging as she helped us gently correct and refine our practices and teaching techniques. The intensive also gave us the tools and confidence to continually evaluate our practice, opening up new dimensions.

All expressed endless gratitude to Sandy, Dan (who was assisting), and me as hostess, with special gratitude reserved for the sensitivity, insight, support, and humor of the other three teachers present. Participants came as serious students, aspiring teachers, and accredited teachers. All left more deeply aware, renewed, rededicated, and eager for another intensive. We imbibed more of the power and wisdom of T'ai Chi Chih and affirmed intensives as invaluable for beginners and more advanced students. Consider being part of the next one as we keep the dream growing and the *Chi* flowing. Before leaving, Sandy said, "Thank you, Sheila, for your vision." It's a pleasure and a privilege. On behalf of all of us, I add, "Thank you, Justin, for *your* vision."



Flowing From The Center With Joy Retreats with Antonia in Santa Barbara, CA; Feb. 12-15 & Feb. 19-22, 2008

COMPILED BY PAM TOWNE, HOST

I received the challenge to go even more deeply. The labyrinth at Mt. Calvary was so rugged and so grounded. This is what my TCC practice felt like.

– NANCY JO BLEIER, SITKA, AK



As I walked down the hallway of the monastery in the hills above Santa Barbara, I stopped in my tracks, watching a solitary figure move effortlessly through Working The Pulley with the ocean as his backdrop. Thank you, Antonia and Pam, for the delightful time we shared.

– ROBIN SPENCER, PHOENIX, AZ

I am very grateful for these times to connect, practice, and learn from others. I came away with new thoughts and insights about many movements. That energizes my practice. – DIANA WRIGHT, FOUNTAIN VALLEY, CA

Antonia had used the word powerful a number of times, alluding to inner changes affecting our perspectives and feelings about personal challenges and the practice of daily living. Perhaps it is about simply refusing to allow disturbance to be a disturbance and to control the negative influences that can affect us. – ANON.

An atmosphere of total acceptance pervaded our personal encounters. We are so deeply gratified by the TCC experience and where it has led us to this point. – ROSEMARIE & AL TAYLOR, SANTA ANA, CA

Becoming In Santa Barbara

BY ANNE LOVDAHL, SEAL BEACH, CA

Justin Stone has written in *Spiritual Odyssey*, "Nothing is in a state of Being; everything is in a state of Becoming (from one point of view). T'ai Chi Chih can greatly influence that path of Becoming." The "state of Becoming" is seen all around and inside of us. In nature, plants continue to grow, bloom, die, and regenerate. Within our bodies, our breath moves in and out with our chest expanding and contracting (yinping and yangping), fortifying and enhancing our blood which circulates, exchanging nutrients with our cells which embark on their journeys of cell division and growth while they take up their unique rolls in the orchestra of our physiology – not just maintaining but regenerating, "Becoming."

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Our brain and spinal fluid continually send and receive electrochemical messages to and from the far reaches of our bodies, enabling movement, expanding knowledge, allowing our “Becoming.”

Our life energy, *Chi*, is the very force that animates us and makes possible the miracle of “Becoming.” The *Chi*, in its constant yinping and yanging, expanding and contracting, is in search of balance. This journey of revitalization, this “Balance Becoming” is endless, just as circularity itself is endless, a ring without beginning or end.

The practice of T'ai Chi Chih is our guide, leading us along our journey of continual balancing, renewal, and endless “Becoming.”

A Teacher Symposium? Yes.

BY DIANA WELSH DURKIN (GLEN ELLYN, IL) AND DONNA McELHOSE (WILDWOOD, IL)

Imagine a beautiful autumnal weekend in the heartland where teachers gather for a T'ai Chi Chih teacher symposium. A TCC teacher what? A symposium you say? How is that different from a conference, retreat, workshop, or intensive? We expect the symposium to have the camaraderie of a conference; the reflective nature of a retreat; the educational benefits of a workshop; and the concentration of an intensive. Sandy McAlister will facilitate this gathering in an atmosphere of collegiality. As she says, “We all have a wealth of experience to share with each other.” This certainly agrees with Webster’s definition of a symposium: “a social gathering at which there is a free interchange of ideas.”

In the symposium’s conceptual infancy, words beginning with the prefix “re” were volleyed around a lunch table. These “re” words seemed to express the ideas that we envisioned for the symposium – revitalize, renew, refresh, review, rejuvenate, reflect, relax, return, and reward. We invite you to join us for the first TCC Teacher Symposium to revitalize or give new life and vigor to your TCC practice and teaching techniques; to renew your commitment to this incredible gift we are accredited to share; to refresh and strengthen our spirit to and fervor for TCC; to review (or see again, study, examine critically, and explore) how we move and how we teach; to rejuvenate our practice by remembering those original “aha” moments we have had over the years in our TCC practice; to reflect or think quietly and calmly (and meditate in this beautiful retreat atmosphere by sitting, walking, resting, doing TCC); to relax, or let go of the tensions in your life, in your practice (time will be provided to soften and recreate); to return to and embrace the practice which motivates us. The rewards, like *Chi*, are cumulative. We invite you to join us for this special opportunity.

Why Your Fellow Teachers Attend Conference

COMPILED BY LISA THORBURN (CASTRO VALLEY, CA)
AND ATHENE MANTLE (SAN JOSE, CA)

Attending the annual T'ai Chi Chih conference has many benefits. Rather than hear more from the 2008 Conference Committee about why you should attend, we asked several regular attendees to answer the question: Why attend a conference?

It's very important to stay in touch with the community of teachers. Every time I attend I make a commitment to my own practice, to the teaching, to the sharing of the energy. I also value the camaraderie and the conversation we share. Each and every time, I find what I am supposed to work on and cultivate until the next conference.

– CAROLINE GUILLOTT, LAKE CHARLES, LA

I value being in the presence of all the other teachers. I have been inspired by conversations with each one of them, especially when meeting them at meals and in interactive workshops.

– CAROLYN ALLENBY, PARADISE VALLEY, AZ

I attend the conference because it allows me to connect with a larger TCC community. It is an amazing experience to look across a room and see more than 125 teachers all doing TCC together.

– “SKY” YOUNG-WICK, PARKVILLE, MO

I attend because I receive greater awareness of how the movements are done better and how they can be done more efficiently. It's great to meet up with old friends and make new friends.

Experiencing such joy through the movement of *Chi* with hundreds of other teachers is beyond anything else.

– NANCY JO BLEIER, SITKA, AK

The most meaningful aspect of attending the conference is the time spent actually doing our TCC practices together. Yes, I love seeing old friends and meeting new ones and all the activities that are planned, but I come for the practices we all do together and for the opportunity to focus on principles and fine tune my practice.

– ROBERTA TAGGART, EUGENE, OR

Attending the annual teacher's conference is essential in so many ways and enhances my abilities as a teacher. I deepen my practice, expand my awareness, cultivate *teh* and re-connect not only with the soles of my feet but also with many wonderful like-minded people. Talk about *Joy Thru Movement*. Treat yourself (and indirectly, your students) to this year's conference. It'll well be worth it.

– APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PA

*We invite you to register now.
Join us in San Mateo, California,
to be “In the Essence.”*

A Quick Convert

By DAVID WASSERSTROM, UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OH

In only a few short weeks, my experience of T'ai Chi Chih has given me a lifetime of value. I've long relied upon basic principles of meditation to help reduce stress and better focus my thoughts. But TCC has taken that to a new and exciting level. Frankly, TCC has proven more accessible to me than meditation, especially within the context of my busy life. That is, I don't always have the time or inclination to devote to concentrated meditation. But TCC can be practiced almost anytime, anywhere, to any degree, and the meditative nature of the movements themselves help engender similar feelings of calm, relaxation, and balance. Furthermore, through periodic practice, I find myself more in control of my posture, my alignment, and my overall disposition. It's as if the rhythms of my movements are softer, more in harmony, and more serene.

We are flooded day and night with noise – society goads us constantly to buy, consume, view, listen, act, and react. I find TCC to be inherently quiet – disconcertingly so at first. But through practice, I feel this quietness will have an ever-more profound effect on me. Although I'm still in the early stages of learning, I know that over time TCC will offer me the promise of balance and sanity. I know it can enhance my health and vitality. And eventually, I believe it will help me channel my energies toward positive change for myself and those around me.

Chronic Fatigue Reduced

By MARGIE CALA, SOUTH EUCLID, OH

I started T'ai Chi Chih three years ago when looking for something I was *able* to do physically. I've had Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS) for twenty years. Hallmark symptoms include fatigue (very low stamina and endurance), muscle and joint pain, and post exertional malaise. I tried T'ai Chi Chu'an but found that it made me feel worse. TCC accommodates my physical limitations and makes me feel like I'm helping my body heal. I believe it enhances my immune system function by circulating the energy, helping me to cope with the disease, and by replacing stress with serenity. The meditative movements center me, improve my balance, and sharpen my focus. My instructor, Donna Tirolly, offers weekly classes through the local recreation department, which keeps me on track and motivates me to practice daily. If I skip daily practice, I feel like something is missing.

Crouching With Impunity

By LAURENDA MESSER, UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OH

My venture into the world of T'ai Chi Chih began at the suggestion of my physician. As I entered my sixties I found that whenever I crouched down – to garden or scrub a floor, for instance – I would gently topple over. I wasn't dizzy; it was more like there'd been a subtle loss of muscle tone.

*practicing
becomes
an end in
itself*

After joining Donna Tirolly's TCC class for a few months, I noticed that I no longer toppled over. I don't pretend to understand the mechanism. Maybe muscle tone did gradually improve with the gentle exercises. Maybe a gradually increasing awareness of my physical self in a spatial sense helped. I don't know. But I can now crouch (and rise from a crouch) with impunity. And my posture is much improved, possibly because "lead with the T'an T'ien" is a more effective instruction than "stand up straight."

These are positive and pragmatic reasons that I'm glad I started TCC classes, but I've found a larger, unexpected, and more difficult to articulate benefit as well. Once the movements have been learned so that the conscious mind doesn't have to be busy remembering them, it can enjoy the sensations experienced in doing the movements. It is freed to feel what it feels like, and that is an experience that brings about an entirely new perception of TCC and its purpose.

I suspect most people begin TCC as a means to an end, but for some of us the practicing becomes an end in itself.



Anxiety Overcome

BY APRIL PUNZO, LAUREL, MD

I passed my exam. I started feeling anxious on Saturday; my heart was racing and I was feeling short of breath. I listened to some relaxing music and did T'ai Chi Chih. Immediately I felt my heart rate decrease; respiration returned to normal. How amazing is that? I started feeling that anxiety again when we arrived at the exam. So I found a quiet corner outside the gym and did Rocking Motion, Around The Platter, Bass Drum, Around The Platter Variation, and Cosmic Consciousness Pose. (I'm a beginner and those were the only ones I could remember.) During the exam I felt my heart racing again, and so I placed my feet on the floor to find my grounding. I began breathing and smelled the lavender scent on my wrist. I stayed relaxed, totally clear and focused, during the Four Corner Jujitsu. This is the first performance where I've not had an anxiety attack, or vomiting, or diarrhea before or during the exam. If I had failed the exam it wouldn't have mattered. My major accomplishment is not the karate belt but my victory over a lifetime struggle with anxiety. Thank you, Donna, for teaching me this wonderful practice of TCC. Your encouraging, kind gentle spirit is inspirational to your students. Words can't express my eternal gratitude.

Grateful For Classes

BY ANDREA BORK, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

I have a friend whom I think would benefit from T'ai Chi Chih. He lives in Boston but I see that there are no teachers in Boston. So I purchased the DVD for him and suggested he attend a workshop or retreat. Before searching almost in vain on his behalf, I didn't realize how fortunate I am to live in a state where I have so many instructors and classes available to me. In the summertime, I can ride my bike less than two miles to a city park where practitioners of T'ai Chi Chih meet beneath a large tree near a fountain at 9am to practice together. Our local instructors take turns leading the group, and it's an amazing way to begin a summer weekend. It's a blessed time in Minnesota. And I shall never take it for granted.



why
do we
take things so
seriously?
please stop and
smell the
rose
– TIFFANY LYEWSANG
(STUDENT OF SHARON SIRKIS)

rain
release
be there now
in the moment
all is one
not two
zen
– JAMI MORGAN
(STUDENT OF LISA OTERO)

no
complaints
from these small
messengers of
synchronized
focused
Chi
– LAURA SCHREIBER
(STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

come
alone
or in groups
to feed and grow
then move on
I feel
joy
– ROSA CATTERALL
(STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

a
drum beat
in my head
the countless things
they call me
I am
deaf
– LONN HESS
(STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

I
see the
changes come
slowly, strongly
giving me
a new
life
– BARBARA HAMMOND
(STUDENT OF DICK DETERT)

love
forgive
compassion
feel the joyful
spirit come
within
you
– KATHLEEN ZUTZ
(STUDENT OF DICK DETERT)

life
often
has courses
where it takes us
it's charming
to guess
where
– RUTH ZACHARIAS
(STUDENT)

me
learning
sharing our
Chi with another
smiling from
within
all
– MARY WHITE
(STUDENT)

life
is like
a long run
with others on
the same road
to keep
care
– SUSAN SKIDMORE
(STUDENT)

Presentations: Facts, Forms, Feelings & Futures

By STEPHEN RYTER, BOISE, ID

One of the traps into which we fall when presenting a proposal is not knowing our audience. If you speak primarily about the benefits that T'ai Chi Chih offers to people's health, doctors may want study results. Audience members with high blood pressure or osteoporosis might rather hear about individual success stories. There may be a way to avoid presenting the wrong material to the group.

Communications experts have settled on four styles of communication or four types of personalities that reflect those styles – facts, forms, feelings, and futures. Virtually no one is exclusive to any one style, but we usually have one dominant. We are all blends of the four.

Facts people like numbers, spreadsheets, and statistically significant results of studies. Bankers, accountants, chief financial officers, and data analysts are facts dominant. They live in Microsoft Access and Excel.

Forms people love process, diagrams, organizational charts, and detailed implementation plans. They love Microsoft Project more than Christmas candy.

Feelings people are pretty obvious. They feel your pain. If you listen to them present a proposal, you'll hear them say, "I feel we should" Massage therapists, psychologists, TCC teachers, and social workers are likely feelings driven.

Futures people live in dreams of what could be. Remember Justin's statement that if everyone practiced TCC there would be no wars? Manny Elkind talks about a trip he and one of his daughters were about to take. They are both futures dominant and talked about all they were going to see, the fun they would have driving there, and the joy of being in the Sunshine State. The night prior to their trip, they realized neither one had made reservations.

When you know your audience, you can tailor your presentation to them. Don't give massage therapists a bunch of statistics, and don't tell yoga teachers about your class implementation plans. If you don't know your audience, make sure your presentation includes information that will appeal to all four dominant communication styles. Test your presentation on someone who will listen carefully and check off how many things you say for each style. If you're working from an outline or script, you can do it yourself. It may make the difference between a successful pitch and one that falls on deaf ears to people who haven't the faintest idea of what you're saying.

Reunion Furthers Community

By MARY SCHAPKER, GALLOWAY, NJ

The 2007 planning committee held a reunion recently in Silver Beach, New Jersey, to celebrate with gratitude the successful outcome of their shared effort. To our great surprise there was no agenda. Hugs and greetings evolved into beach walking, journaling, reading, meditating, chatting – utter freedom to drink in the relaxed atmosphere.

By Friday afternoon we were practicing T'ai Chi Chih and gazing at the ocean. We dedicated our first practice to Nancy Hall, a New Jersey teacher who had died, and we reunited with her in the midst of this reunion. On Saturday we viewed the video of Justin's life, and we savored the evening while watching a fire through special glasses that Sandy McAlister had sent.

As we departed on Sunday, we agreed that it had been an extraordinary adventure to be involved from start to finish with the 2007 conference. We felt that a community was formed within the larger community of TCC teachers before, during, and after the conference and that it was a tremendous gift to be part of it. I also believe the reunion was helpful in that we processed the conference experience in a setting of leisure, joy, and spontaneity. We discovered that playing together after working together was a healthy conclusion to undertaking such a sizeable event. It brought more balance and harmony to us as individuals and as a group. The weekend flowed with the same serenity present during the conference. Our deepest thanks go to Janet and Alba for their outstanding leadership and for their creative and dynamic orchestration of a beautiful reunion.

Planning a conference and serving the TCC community cannot be more recommended highly.



A Bookend For Abandon Hope: A Message Of Hope

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

What a treat reading the last *Vital Force*. It was late, after an unusually busy day, and I was tired and ready for bed. But something called me to pick up

The Vital Force and start reading. Justin set the tone for the issue: "I must contribute something worthwhile in this little piece, something approaching the attitude of love." This is always his attitude. He always tries to bring out the best in all of us. And he has given us the perfect medium to grow in love – T'ai Chi Chih.

Each article had so much depth and love. The honesty with which each article was written moved my heart. Teachers talked about challenges they faced and the gratitude they felt for TCC. Thinking (always the beginning of the problem) was always overcome with doing. TCC is not about doing it any old way but doing it with *teh*. Believing that many repetitions done carelessly will produce the highest results is ludicrous. We all know the joy when we do the most conscious TCC that we can. In that moment of being fully present, something changes inside us. It helps us release what has kept us from a truly joyful, memorable practice.

The work that is happening gently because of TCC (as Justin says, "without hype and without trying to find the angle") is the true work of TCC. It isn't going to happen overnight. Many of us know that what we experienced after 10 years of practice is important but pales in comparison to what we now know is possible. We ebb and flow, knowing the challenges and realizations of letting go. We grow two steps forward and then find we have slipped three steps backward. Perhaps our practice is magical at one time, lifeless at another. Through it all, the opportunity to practice and learn from the practice is there. This is the message of hope I read in so many articles. This message is what many of us are finding allows us to grow, love, and share the *Chi*.



A Pathway Chosen

By DORENE KRAUSE, MIDLAND PARK, NJ

Every pathway chosen begins with one small step
And for whatever reason, no matter the circumstance,
You took one yin-yang step, then another and another.
Awakening the *Chi*, seeking balance and peace,
You embarked on a journey –
Unaware, I am certain, that this *Chi*,
Cultivated by your teachers and
Nourished by the energy pervading the universe –
Would guide you here to this place
At this point in time.

You came with your eyes and your hearts wide open.
I listened to your inner voices speak.
I heard and felt your sincerity, integrity,
Your desire to receive and your joy.
I watched your eyes and your faces
Which spoke with no words.
I saw and felt your determination and concentration,
Exhaustion and confusion and again your joy.

As delicate flowers hidden beneath the frozen ground
You waited out the winter patiently,
Quietly receiving,
Nourished by the earth's energy,
And now for you, spring has arrived.
You have emerged and blossomed –
Strong, yet soft, unique and beautiful
With roots firmly planted, grounded,
Connected with the cosmic rhythm.

Now you are accredited T'ai Chi Chih instructors,
But your journey has not ended.
It never does.
There is no final destination.

There are more steps to take on this pathway.
You and your practice will continue to evolve.
T'ai Chi Chih changes lives, as it has yours,
And now you will change the lives of others.

You have embraced the essence of T'ai Chi Chih
And it has embraced you.
Your cup is full to overflowing.
Spill forth all that you have experienced
And all that you have become.
Share the gift that you have received.
Welcome to the T'ai Chi Chih community of teachers.

One Degree Of Separation – Or Six Degrees?

In talking with a T'ai Chi Chih teacher friend recently, I came to clearly understand a fundamental choice or position that we all have to make as teachers and students of TCC. This teacher believes that it's inevitable that T'ai Chi Chih, one day, will morph into something that doesn't really resemble Justin Stone's TCC. His analogy went something like this: take an original to the Xerox machine and make a copy. Then make a copy from that copy and another from that copy and so on. By the tenth generation of copies what you see will only faintly resemble the original. It's just the way it is, he said. But I disagree about the inevitable outcome because of one important reason: *We have a great DVD of Justin Stone doing TCC.* No one need ever be more than one generation removed from Source. Ever. Imagine having a video recording of the Buddha teaching meditation under the Bodhi tree. It's as simple and clear as that.

A 15-year veteran teacher phoned GKP recently to order photo texts and I asked her why she never ordered the DVD. She said she'd never seen it so she couldn't recommend it to her students. I gently suggested that she might want to check it out. Now that she has, she orders it for her students.

Re-naming The Movements & The Practice?

When referring to the movements while teaching or as a student, please retain the original full and proper names. Please don't say "Wrist Circles" when it's really "Pulling Taffy, Variation Two, Wrist Circles." Please don't say "The Daughters" when it's "Daughter On The Mountaintop" and "Daughter In The Valley." Please don't say that TCC consists of 20 movements when it really consists of 19 movements and one pose. Why? Because before you know it, twenty years down the road, no one will recall the proper names or how you really do them, and perhaps someone will come along and call the movements T'ai Chi Chop. When we don't act from the highest integrity with intention, we're usually on a slippery slope in the wrong direction.

We all know what problems arise when T'ai Chi Chih isn't referred to as T'ai Chi Chih in the press. The studies out of UCLA using T'ai Chi Chih can't seem to get it right, and when the press breaks (even more than it has) it's not going to do teachers and practitioners of TCC any good – unless we stand firm in insisting that "Chih" be used. Please do not drop the "Chih" when speaking or writing about TCC.

BY KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Pyramid Poems

soft
I am
retreating
into myself
in circles
flowing
Chi
– SHERYL ADAIR

joy
is here
in my heart
the universe
is also
inside
me
– JUDY HENDRICKS

do
it now
for it to
be accomplished
or it will
never
be
– HUGH MITTEN

my
soul is
full of joy
warmth, well-being
continue
to heal
soar
– CATHIE BUSCHAU

love
justin
T'ai Chi Chih
one and the same
showing the
way to
joy
– DORA DERZON

sweet
softness
T'ai Chi Chih
what do you bring
beloved
truth and
love
– ROBERT MONTES
DE OCA

cars
racing
outside class
yet T'ai Chi Chih
quietness
louder
still
– MARILYN IRWIN

see
the bird
in the tree
I am too loud
there he goes
goodbye
gone
– KEITH S.

trees
blowing
sun shining
Chi flowing through
connecting
us as
one
– GLEN ADSIT

peace
balance
T'ai Chi Chih
becoming more
another
person
now
– NANCY GIMBLE-
LITTLE

T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WITH WHOM	WHERE	CONTACT
2008			
July 17-20	Teacher Conference	San Mateo, CA San Mateo Marriott conference@taichichih-norcal.org, For more info: www.taichichihnorcal.org/conference.htm	Lisa Thorburn & Athene Mantle
Oct. 17-19	Teacher Symposium w/ Sandy	Chicago area	Donna McElhose dmcelhosechi@aol.com 847-223-6065
Oct. 22-26	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	Tupelo, MS	Ron Richardson ron_richardson@comcast.net 662-844-6473
2009			
Feb. 20-22	Teacher Retreat w/ Antonia	San Francisco Bay Area, CA	Athene Mantle chigoddess@hotmail.com
Feb. 24-27	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary	Pam Towne pamtowne@sbcglobal.net
Mar. 3-6	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary	Pam Towne 760-944-9544

MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

(Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC)

2009			
June 14	Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM Spiritual Renewal Ctr	Judy Hendricks JudyHendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810
Aug. 1-3	TCC Workshop w/ Dan Pienciak	St. John's, NL Canada	Sheila Leonard sheilaleonard@nf.sympatico.ca 709-579-7863
Sept. 18-21	TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM Spiritual Renewal Ctr	Judy Hendricks JudyHendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810

*Come and connect with your
T'ai Chi Chih community*



T'ai Chi Chih Conference 2008
July 17-20, San Francisco Bay Area, California

For registration and conference information, please visit our web site
www.taichichih-norcal.org/conference.htm or e-mail conference co-hosts
Lisa Thorburn and Athene Mantle, conference@taichichih-norcal.org

Join us In the Essence

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

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

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

Name of "second signature" _____

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