

The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

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for teachers & students

August 2008

Justin's Words

TCC Has Changed My Life BY JUSTIN STONE

The recent birthday party at the T'ai Chi Chih Center in Albuquerque was a significant occasion. It may sound strange, but TCC is making the world a better place in which to live.

One would expect that organized religions would help in this task, but such is not the case. The Middle East is so steeped in violence that Muslims are killing other Muslims. I say this reluctantly because I was once very grateful that the Muslim Society, which preserved our classical art and philosophic heritage from Greece and Rome. Would we want to be without Plato and Socrates?

Without politicians and various militaries would there be the present turmoil? "Live and let live" would be the order of the day.

I am very doubtful that such will prevail as long as mankind still exists upon the earth, which is a big "if." Meanwhile, TCC will do its best. Feel proud to be part of it.



*snow
silent
so still in
meditation
how dare we
inter
upt*

*look
under
your own feet
find the secret
universe
when you
die*

THESE TWO
PYRAMID POEMS
WERE WRITTEN
BY JUSTIN IN 1999
ON A FLIGHT TO KYOTO.

••••

"TAI CHI CHIH IS A SERVICE TO HUMANITY. IT IS A FORM OF LOVE." JUSTIN STONE, ORIGINATOR

••••

WWW.TAICHICHIH.ORG

Besides our teachers, the web site is our most valuable resource for spreading the word about T'ai Chi Chih. If you are a teacher, please consider linking your site to this main one. On the flip side, it has long been the policy of *The Vital Force* not to link out to individual teacher sites, as we do not want to co-mingle TCC with other practices. This is the same reason that we only list TCC-centered events in the Community Calendar.



www.taichichih.org

The website serves many purposes for a myriad of audiences. If you are a teacher who wants to give an overview of TCC to a journalist, the site has great background information about the benefits of TCC; commentary, articles, and insights about the originator, Justin Stone; a photo gallery of Justin Stone performing the movements; and press clippings and studies about TCC in the news. It has a complete Community Calendar for events held around the country, as well as information about *Seijaku* (advanced TCC) and Good Karma Publishing. If you are a

student who just moved and are looking for a teacher in your area, we have an easy, drop-down menu to search state-by-state or country-by-country. If you are a student wishing to become accredited to teach TCC (which is a requirement), all the information is readily available at your fingertips. If you are a teacher wishing to promote a retreat or event wholly related to TCC, the site has a place for you. It's all there in an easy-to-use format.

EMAIL LISTS

Although teachers are listed publicly on the web site, so that students may find them, this contact information is not to be culled from this site for any use. We rely on the integrity of the teachers to maintain this.

ACCREDITED & NON-ACCREDITED TEACHERS

If you hear of people teaching TCC without having become accredited to teach, please contact Good Karma Publishing (which holds the copyright and registered trademark for T'ai Chi Chih) and Antonia Cooper (TCC's guide) with pertinent details. Contact information is on the back page. In order to maintain the high quality of teaching and the integrity of the practice, accredited teachers must impress upon their students that only accredited teachers may teach TCC. The future of TCC depends upon it.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Table of Contents

Justin Stone	1
From the Editor	2
Noteworthy	3
Service	4-5
Guiding Thoughts: Sr. Antonia	6
Sandy Says / Pam Says	7
In The News	8-9
Teaching Tips:	
Daughter on the Mountaintop	10-11
Climb the Joyous Mountain	12
Justin Stone	13
For Teachers	14-15
Events	16-18
By Students / For All	19-21
Lighter Side	22
Community Calendar	23
Contacts / Subscribe	24

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)
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
July 1	Early August	Awareness	Pulling in the Energy

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Practice When You Want To ...

By MICHAEL S. ISAACS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

such
silent flow,
exquisite
effortlessness,
and
profound
serenity

Before a recent vacation trip, I was in a self-pitying mood. There was a long wait at the airport, and since my flight was delayed, there was plenty of time to do my daily T'ai Chi Chih practice. However, the last thing I wanted to do was TCC. To think that "joy thru movement" could alter my morbid state seemed remote.

But I remembered the advice of Woody Allen who said that one of the most important things in life is showing up. I reluctantly moved my body into the standing position in preparation. During Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps Its Wings, I felt stiff and uncoordinated. By the time it came to

Around the Platter, however, I was surprised when all muscle tension melted from my body. My center, arms, and legs moved without any effort. An image popped into my mind of a spider slowly, silently, and gradually weaving a soft web.

The rest of the practice continued in the same amazing manner. I had never before experienced such silent flow, exquisite effortlessness, and profound serenity. Why did this blissful experience occur at this time? Two possibilities come to mind. One was my attitude of little expectation. I just didn't care about performance, goals, or achievements. It was something like the feeling that Rhett Butler expressed to Scarlet in *Gone With The Wind*: "Frankly, Scarlet, I don't give a damn!" I also remembered Justin's example of how to move. He referred to the physical and mental state of an inebriated man. His body was as limp as a scarecrow; all thought processes were eradicated; he was in a dreamlike state.

The second possibility was a passage from *A Potter's Notes on T'ai Chi Chih*, by Margy Emerson, that was still in my mind from the night before: "Sometimes I deliberately envision waterfalls or yards of feather-light silk billowing, curving back on itself as extensions of my movements...more and more I descended into silence...there was only a vibration-long, slow, smooth waves not seen or heard or even felt in the usual way... and that's when the center is touched...it all starts with the silence of not thinking, not anticipating."

For me, what happened was an "in the essence" experience. TCC was doing TCC. My movements were totally coordinated. I was truly in the present moment – embraced in silence, harmony, and serenity. Moral of the story: practice regularly whether you feel like it or not.

Finding TCC As Early As Possible

By SETH AMBROSE, YORK, PA (STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

I'm 23 years old and feel compelled to share my story of recovery and T'ai Chi Chih. Over the past seven months I have been healing from a very low point in my life, which started with periods of anxiety, depression, and insomnia. On September 10th, 2007, I jumped out of my apartment window onto the concrete below. The suicide attempt caused an epidural hematoma and required an immediate craniotomy. I think this whole incident might have been avoided if I had found TCC earlier.

During my recovery, TCC has been very relaxing and quite beneficial to improving my motor skills and balance. TCC has been the fourth branch of my therapeutic tree that has included physical, speech, and occupational therapies. I'm not diminishing the effects that the other three therapies have had on my revival, but I feel that TCC has helped me find balance and serenity.

My first introduction to TCC was in the psychiatric ward of the hospital that initially treated me. After being released, my family gave me a great Christmas gift: further instruction in TCC. Ever since enrolling in the class, things have gotten better and better. I have graduated from my formal therapies but still continue to do my daily TCC therapy. I feel the benefits every day. I've found my *Chi*.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me during these challenging but uplifting months. I'd like to thank God for giving me another chance at life. Thanks to my wonderful family. Thanks to my friends who have given me a shoulder

to lean on. Thanks to the doctors and therapists who have aided in my recovery. And last, but certainly not least, thanks to Hope Spangler for introducing me to this wonderful practice. She continues to be a great friend along with all the friends I've made along this TCC journey.



In The Name of Love

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

He had finally found a place and people – in Japan – who touched his heart and mind in a way that only love can do. His intention was to stay there. But something within him called him back to the United States. Justin had to come home. T'ai Chi Chih needed to come into the world. His students were waiting for him, eager and hungry for the blessing that wanted to come into the world.

*a life of
service
usually
requires a
turnaround*

One of his first stops was Taos, New Mexico. But one morning after dropping off his laundry at the cleaners, it occurred to him that it was time to go to Albuquerque. There was no reason; it was just time. He asked a friend to mail his laundry; there was no time to wait a couple of days for it.

In Albuquerque he dropped into a bookstore (one of his favorite haunts) and was asked, "What is it that you do?" The only answer that came to him was, "I guess I teach T'ai Chi." (TCC had not been born yet.) Two students jumped up from behind a row of books and said, "It's about time; we've been waiting for you." So had we all. One could say that was the beginning of TCC. But the true beginning was when Justin said "yes" to life. Yes to leaving a lucrative career in the stock market for parts unknown. Yes to entering a world that would include Paul Reps, Swami Krishnanand, Roshi Joshu Sasaki, and so many more who had also left regular lives for bigger lives of service.

A life of service usually requires a turnaround in the road of life – a turn towards something unknown but needed, something important to the greater whole. Sometimes illness brings this about; sometimes financial changes or changes in personal relationships bring this about. But there is always a change. Many TCC teachers can relate to this. They often say or write that, "TCC has changed my life." This change isn't usually a one-time event. Once it begins, change becomes the most important thing we do. We grow and we prosper as we swim in the flow of life. Each time we say "no" to life, our life feels small and constricted. Life makes sure that we're aware that the most important thing we can do is to stay open to experience. As we do this we learn to love and share the *Chi*.

Giving & Receiving The Gift

By CATHERINE FEDEWA, PITTSBURGH, PA

From the time I began learning T'ai Chi Chih, my goal was to share the practice with others. It was too good to keep just for myself. This continued to be my intention when I went through teacher accreditation. How can I use this to help others? I knew I needed to start simply – by teaching whatever classes I could organize. I needed enough experience with different students to know how they would respond to the movements. My full time ministry, though, kept me too busy to teach more than the two or three classes a year. I was a bit frustrated at not being able to do more – until I started getting feedback from students telling me what a wonderful gift TCC practice has been for them.

Those gifts ranged from maintaining balance when getting dressed in the morning to being more comfortable conducting staff meetings; from being able to fall asleep when a mind was racing to the gift of new life through pregnancy (which the student attributed to an increased flow of *Chi*).

I had always felt that for a TCC class to be of service, I would need to volunteer or teach at a very minimal charge. I have and will continue do both of those, but I have also found that regular classes are also a service to everyone who attends. Even the smallest benefit that a student receives is a gift, and my teaching ministry has helped them access that gift.

Personally, I am also gifted every time I share the movements with someone, whether formally or informally. Knowing that I am opening a student to the gifts of TCC practice and to new possibilities is my service to them and a gift to myself.



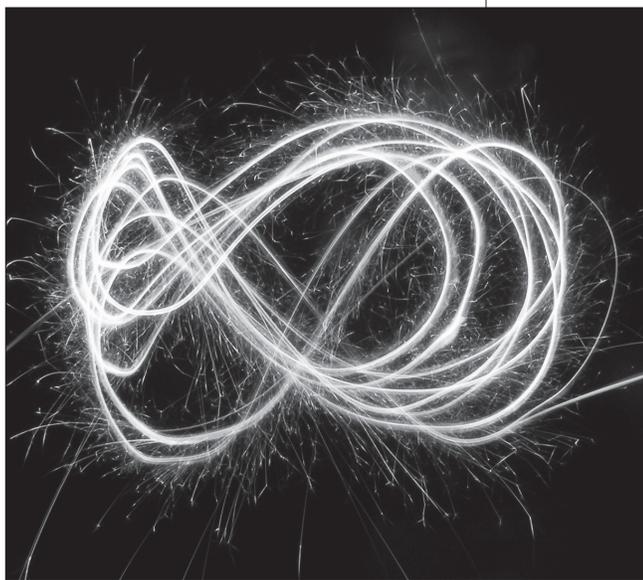
Serving Is Being

BY ROBERT MONTES DE OCA, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Being of service is simply being; there is no exception. Like T'ai Chi Chih is a service to humanity – offering love, joy, peace, and harmony – service itself offers an opportunity to incorporate these qualities into our daily lives. As we embody circularity, continuity, softness, and substance in our daily TCC practice, so too do we need to embody these principles in our daily lives. Being – it's all inside.

Many opportunities have come my way to open to the universe and be of service to the community. My volunteer services extend to the clinic at the Animal Humane Association (where my heart goes out to those beautiful animals); to the Spiritual Renewal Center (where I teach TCC to retreatants, help in the pantry, and set up, serve, and clean up in the dining room); and to the T'ai Chi Chih Association of New Mexico (where I serve as a board member). I do the latter because TCC has changed my life, and my gratitude reflects the feeling of giving back. The openness I feel during retreats in Albuquerque, when I pick people up at the airport and welcome them to the retreat, is a blessing.

In the last few weeks, another service opportunity has come my way, and I have accepted it with some trepidation. An acquaintance was going on vacation and asked if I would substitute for him at the Metropolitan Detention Center, which is the city and county jail. I was to be trained at PAC 2, the Psychiatric Acute Care unit, where each person decides for himself whether he wants to participate in the activity being offered. The PAC unit is very transitional; the men may be there for a period of 30 days. The number of participants also fluctuates each time; we had two participants on the day of my training. (Since the training, I've noticed that if I wear a TCC t-shirt, more participants join in the class than if I don't wear one.) Recently, I was blessed by being asked to continue teaching TCC at the Metropolitan Detention Center.



T'ai Chi Chih Gardening

BY LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

The practice of T'ai Chi Chih is like tending a beautiful garden. How does your garden grow?

CULTIVATE THE SOIL

Become a lifelong student of TCC.

SOW THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Practice TCC regularly – when you feel like it and when you don't.

PROVIDE FRESH AIR AND SUNLIGHT

Practice TCC outside, inhaling Universal *Chi*.

NOURISH WITH WATER

Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fluids, especially water.

STAKE YOUR PLANT

Always be aware being suspended in the head top *and* rooted in the soles of the feet.

USE A HOE

Create motor pathways in the brain through regular practice so that your movements are effortless.

WEED THE GARDEN

Simplify the movement patterns and discard what is not needed.

GET RID OF PESTS

Empty the mind of agitated thoughts and feelings; move with feeling awareness.

USE CLIPPERS

Snip off all extraneous movements, release tension, and let the *Chi* flow unencumbered.

MULCH AND FERTILIZE

Enrich your understanding and practice with books by Justin Stone and soft music.

ROTATE THE CROPS

Do not let your practice stagnate and wither.

Pure and Simple

BY SR. ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NJ

It was recently brought to my attention that there are a number of popular forms of T'ai Chi under the main title of "T'ai Chi for Health." There is T'ai Chi for Beginners, for Back Pain, for Older Adults, for Osteoporosis, for Diabetes, 4 Kidz, at Work and In Flight.

In 1974 when Justin first taught T'ai Chi Chih in Albuquerque, he began hearing how these 19 simple movements and one final pose had healing effects on the body, mind, and spirit. From the beginning TCC has been an all-inclusive practice. From what I am told, the countless benefits experienced by individuals who learned and practiced TCC were very surprising to Justin. Over the years he has shared stories about such life-changing, life-enhancing experiences. In the June 2008 issue of the *New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News*, Justin writes, "I wish that, from the beginning of TCC, I had saved all the letters I have received in which the writer wrote, 'TCC has changed my life.' Most seem to have experienced deep spiritual feelings after TCC." (As a footnote, could it be that no letters were kept due to non-attachment? We may never know.)

Individuals practice and become teachers because of changes they experience and want to share – changes that could not have been predicted. How can one ever possibly categorize or enumerate the thousands of ways TCC has renewed lives – on levels from subtle to sublime? How wisely Justin teaches: Just do it and see what happens. He always cautions teachers about making promises that TCC helps this or that ailment or problem. Justin has also written that because of her TCC practice, a nurse from London no longer kicks the cat or yells at her school-bound youngsters. Instead, they now enjoy a happier household. This is the result of TCC practice as it circulates and balances the *Chi*. As it says on page 5 of the photo textbook, *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*, "Each person will feel the surge of Vital Force in his or her own way, and it is a pleasant feeling. This heat current is also said to be very healing in nature..."

Both issues of *Blooming the Flower*, published by the T'ai Chi Chih Association of New Mexico, contain personal accounts of how TCC has transformed lives in as many ways as there are reports and reporters. The character of *Chi* is unique to each, and so are the results when it circulates and is brought into balance. Very often this transformation is noticed by spouses or friends when they express, "There is something very different about you, and I don't know exactly what it is." Even if no one else notices, by simply being faithful to our daily practice, we discover who and what we are. Our inner life begins to take on a whole other meaning. The "I" begins to drop away, and we really come to Know (as in chih).

An inner awareness emerged in a group of new students who gathered for a TCC retreat at the Jersey Shore in mid-June. Of the

12 women, 11 were religious sisters who had come for their yearly retreat. Each wrote a pyramid poem to reflect that experience.

now
we know
who you are
a peace dancer
leading us
to the
one
– SR. JULIE SCANLAN, SC

sweet
moments
daughter on
the mountaintop
leading us
into
peace
– SR. MARIE GILLIGAN, SC

tone
balance
gently flow
the movements of
energy
passing
clouds
– SR. PATRICIA MAYER, SC

I
came like
a staple
but advanced to
spaghetti
going
home
– SR. SUZANNE FAULKER, SC

soft
drifting
hands gently
cup energy
t'ai chi chih
through me
flows
– ROSEMARIE McCABE

come
retreat
relax pray
do t'ai chi chih
mind-heart-soul
renewed
go
– CAROL WILLIAMS, SC

rest
gentle
t'ai chi chih
reach distant stars
energy
motion
Chi
– SR. BESS DE SANTIS, SSJ

a
gift of
t'ai chi chih
returns balance
so gently
in God
thanks
– SR. KATHY QUIGLEY, SC

I
came here
not knowing
my Chi power
now knowing
I say
thanks
– SR. REGINA McCALLA, SSJ

push
pulley
swimming arms
catch some raindrops
let them go...
trying's
hard
– SR. ANNE HAARER, SC

Honor The Stillness

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

T'ai Chi Chih's uniqueness and power comes from its combination of movement and stillness. Repetitions of a movement followed by stillness set TCC apart from other forms.

The ultimate goal of TCC practice is to balance our life force or *Chi*. The concept of balance is played out in several ways in our practice. One's physical balance may improve through regular practice. Most movements are balanced by performing them on the left and then on the right. A most important concept to embrace is that the moving part of TCC is balanced with stillness. Movement and stillness are intertwined and dependent on one another in TCC; without the stillness TCC is diminished.

When teaching TCC it is important to impress upon the student the value of stillness –resting between movements. As we move, the *Chi* is stimulated and circulates through the body. As it circulates the two aspects of *Chi*, the yin *Chi* and yang *Chi*, separate. In concluding a set of repetitions of a movement, we come into the rest position. While in this stillness the two aspects of *Chi* blend back together.

It is like the process of making bread. Kneading and working the dough is equivalent to circulating the *Chi* in our practice during our movements. With each repetition we knead and work and move the *Chi*. When the dough sits to rise, that is akin to us resting in stillness during our graceful conclusion at the end of each movement. As the dough sits, a chemical interaction takes place in that stillness, and the dough rises. As we come into stillness, the flow of *Chi* settles down, and the yin *Chi* and yang *Chi* reintegrate. Without the rest or stillness between movements our TCC practice would fall flat.

As we are fully present with our movements so we are fully present with the stillness. "Holding fast and letting go" are words from a meditation Justin Stone teaches, and they can be applied to the stillness in TCC practice. The stillness is solid, spacious, palpable, empty, and freeing. Freeing from thought of past and future. And when the fully present, empty feeling of stillness is grasped, and held fast long enough to feel to the core of one's being, then it is time to let go. Release the stillness and move again.

Only by honoring the stillness, by giving it our full attention, being patient to linger in its fullness, can we plumb the depths of TCC.

Another Avenue of Service

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

Have you ever wished for a teacher training or an intensive in your geographical area? It is possible to have these T'ai Chi Chih events near you, but it is up to you to make that happen. As Justin Stone intended, TCC does not have a formal organization. So there is no corporate headquarters that decides when and where these events take place. We are a grassroots community of teachers and students, united by our common interest in and appreciation for this beneficial form that has changed our lives.

Thus, requests for trainings come from the community – you. That doesn't mean that we can offer trainings for one or two people whenever one is requested. Justin designed the accreditation week to be a transformational experience, enhanced by being in a group. A minimum of eight people is required for an accreditation course. You can make a difference by having trainings in your area. It starts with intention, whether you are an accredited TCC teacher or want to be one. The *Chi* can show you the way.

Early on, Justin developed the model of having TCC teachers host community events that he led. This model is still in use today, with the teacher trainers leading accreditations and intensives that are hosted by a teacher or group of teachers. This is where you can make a difference. An intensive is generally scheduled first, followed by a training four to six months later. If you are a TCC teacher, you can be of great service by hosting these events by yourself or with other teachers. If you are a student wanting to become accredited, ask your teacher to be a host. It's valuable to connect with others who also want to become TCC teachers and to encourage each other. You

can also let me know, and I'll align with your intention.

For more information on hosting and scheduling intensives or teacher trainings, contact Sandy or me. Our contact information on the back page of *The Vital Force*.



T'ai Chi Chih[®] – Joy Thru Movement

T'ai Chi Chih is a series of movements designed to activate and balance the *Chi* (life energy) which flows in all living beings. It is often regarded as a moving meditation since the slow, gentle movements calm the mind, ease tension and generally improve the physical and mental makeup of the practitioner. The purpose of this article is to familiarize the reader with this modern movement form.

T'ai Chi Chih was first originated by American Justin Stone in 1974. It has grown by word of mouth (there is no formal organization) such that there are now approximately 2,200 certified teachers in six countries. Tens of thousands of students have been taught this simple movement form. Stone was a T'ai Chi Ch'uan master who traveled, lived and studied extensively in the Far East. While teaching at the University of New Mexico in the 1970s it became clear to him that for the typical westerner, learning the 108 movements of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, which can require great physical agility and strength, was often too challenging for the beginning student. Many students, discouraged or lacking discipline, abandoned the practice. The 19 movements and one pose of T'ai Chi Chih, conversely, are relatively easy to learn and are generally taught in eight sessions. The movements themselves are done in a standing position and have simple descriptive names such as Bass Drum, Daughter on the Mountaintop and Working the Pulley. Students can learn in group classes or individually by certified teachers (a list of resources is included at the end of this article). An instructional DVD by Justin Stone is also available.

Anecdotal evidence for health improvement ranges from general feelings of wellbeing, improved energy, and better mental concentration to decreased doses of medication for such medical conditions such as hypertension, arthritis and diabetes mellitus. Other practitioners have reported weight loss and reduction of chronic pain. It is interesting to note there have been several medical studies specifically on T'ai Chi Chih and its health benefits.

A study in the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* found that T'ai Chi Chih practice in seniors resulted in a statistically significant improvement in balance. There was also a noted reduction in blood pressure with some of the participants (though this was not statistically significant.) The study concluded that T'ai Chi Chih was a safe and enjoyable form of exercise that can be learned in a short amount of time. Its advantages over traditional exercise include the fact that it does not require any special clothing or equipment and once learned, can be practiced in the home.

A study by the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute published in the

Editor's Note: Rhonda St. Martin, RN, submitted this article on T'ai Chi Chih to the Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning, published by the American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners for its summer 2008 publication. She also gave a TCC presentation at the annual conference to this specialty group of nurses in Florida in 2007. This article strives to provide an overview of the current scientific literature on TCC without losing its undefinable (no words) mystical qualities. It's a perfect example of synthesizing TCC facts with experience, and it is perfectly tailored for her audience. Rhonda speaks of her experiences in the third person because that is appropriate for the readership.

journal *Psychosomatic Medicine* found T'ai Chi Chih practice resulted in improved immunological function in seniors at risk for developing herpes zoster (shingles). Evidence for the results came from blood tests measuring immunity factors that suppress shingles. (All of the seniors had had varicella zoster [chicken pox] earlier in life.) Participants in the study also reported improved physical health and an improved ability to move through their day. Researchers were very enthused as this study, funded by the NIH National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. It was the first randomized, controlled study to demonstrate that behavior can have a positive effect on immunity that protects against shingles.

T'ai Chi Chih is recommended in the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*, and Dr. David Walter of the Los Angeles Times has stated that "T'ai Chi Chih reduces stress, and if you can reduce stress, it can work on all kinds of ailments. We know ulcers, chemical dependency, emotional neuroses, hypertension – a lot of common 20th century ailments – are stress-related." The *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter* reported that rheumatoid arthritis patients practicing T'ai Chi twice a week for three months reported less tender joints than those patients in a control group.

This author began studying T'ai Chi Chih in 1986 through a continuing education class offered through the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, NM. One of the first observations she had was a diuresing effect. When she asked her teacher, Carmen Brocklehurst (of the nationally syndicated television program "T'ai Chi Chih, Joy Thru Movement" which aired on PBS for more than ten years), she smiled and replied, "It's working." Indeed it was later learned that one of the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih is that it dries up the excess aqueous fluids in the body, one of many examples of its physical balancing effects. Other benefits experienced by this practitioner include improved sleep, better balance and coordination and a greater sense of presence in the body. It also made her, in a very simple sense, feel greater happiness. For an individual with a history of chronic pain or previous trauma, this effect can feel like a miracle. It is thus no surprise that the originator of T'ai Chi Chih, Justin Stone, now 91 and living alone in his home and still practicing

CONTINUED ON P. 9



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T'ai Chi Chih, states that the most common report he receives from teachers and students alike is that "T'ai Chi Chih has changed my life."

It is paradoxical that the soft and slow movements of T'ai Chi Chih can have such a powerful effect on the body. In this regard the practice becomes a metaphor for how we move through life. It is said that the soft tongue outlasts the hard teeth, that the soft water wears away the hard rock. T'ai Chi Chih seems to activate the life energy (also known as vital force or intrinsic energy) which is commonly felt but not widely recognized in traditional western medicine. It is not the same as blood flow, although both are necessary for life. Everyone has had the experience of improved energy versus times when one feels dull, lethargic or tired. T'ai Chi Chih practice seems to result in a type of purification of this vital energy through activating and balancing the flow of *Chi*. It is said that this *Chi* is intelligent energy. Increasingly scientific inquiry appears to be supporting the concept of an internal wisdom living within the body. How this is communicated on a cellular level remains a mystery. How is this wisdom accessed?

In T'ai Chi Chih, the practitioner does not prescribe or direct the flow of *Chi*. This *Chi* is said to be self-correcting in the body and by simply performing the movements one obtains the benefits. Thus the old adage "analysis is paralysis" can be applied. Indeed because one makes the effort of not thinking during practice, it seems to bring about a calmness or peace of mind one might expect from a more traditional meditation. Practice is a time to allow cerebral activity to rest. Such analysis is not helpful or even desirable to practice, although a sincere attitude in performing the movements correctly does seem to aid in the results. As Mr. Stone has frequently said, "Just do the movements and see for yourself." T'ai Chi Chih is not a religion nor does it ascribe to any dogma or doctrines. In this

way it can be very accurately described as spiritual in nature.

In our role as Nurse Life Care Planners, information is often requested by clients who are desiring a broader range of options for addressing both disease management and enhanced wellness options in their lives. The NLCP can be in a pivotal position to introduce information on such movement practices, which can offer both physical and mental benefits to the practitioner. It is also possible that such practices can offer tremendous health benefit to the NLCP. Modeling positive health practices remains one of the most powerful tools in the nurse's arsenal of health teachings.

As T'ai Chi Chih becomes better known in the public and medical communities, access to clear and accurate information about it will be helpful those considering study of this movement discipline. For additional information refer to the website, www.taichichih.org and other related websites, www.taichichihassociation.org and www.gkpub.com. It is said that, "You cannot appease the hunger by simply reading the menu." In this regard T'ai Chi Chih is best understood by experiencing the practice whose tag line is "Joy thru Movement." It is this author's sincere desire to bring T'ai Chi Chih to the broader disabled community as well as its treatment providers.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rhonda St. Martin, BSN, RN, CCM, CDMS, CNLCP, has worked in the field of rehabilitation management continuously since 1985. She works as a Certified Case Manager and Certified Nurse Life Care Planner for Broadspire (formerly Crawford Healthcare Management.) She is a dedicated meditator and became certified to teach T'ai Chi Chih in 1994. Rhonda has a passionate interest in Eastern philosophy, integrative medicine and healthcare reform. She loves teaching wellness to anyone who will listen. In her spare time, she enjoys doing nothing. Contact her at Rhonda.stmartin@choosebroadspire.com, or 505-299-7038.

Keeping Daughter on the Mountaintop Simple

BY JEAN KATUS, RAPID CITY, SD

My main emphases when I teach Daughter on the Mountaintop are: 1) synchronization of the feet and hands, and 2) keeping the fingertips pointed upward for most of the hand motion.

Besides using Justin's wording that the movement starts low to go high, I often comment, "The hands start rising only when the weight begins to shift forward." The focus on the feet – where the attention should be – also gives the sense of the lower body (legs) leading and the upper body following, even though both parts operate simultaneously. The hands reach their highest point at the top intersection of the circles when the weight is completely forward. They only begin moving downward as the weight begins to shift back.

To avoid what Justin calls the elbows aiming outward like arrows, I remind students to keep their fingertips pointing upward for most of the movement, with the wrists gently cocked and without tension. Fingertips begin to point downward to start the next set of circles only when the bottom intersection of the circles is reached and the weight is nearly all on the back foot.

As we begin shifting the weight back, I say, "Up, up, up" in reference to the fingertips. This keeps the elbows close to the sides of the body and again reinforces the concept that the hand movement is almost entirely wrists and fingers, with no upper arm involvement.

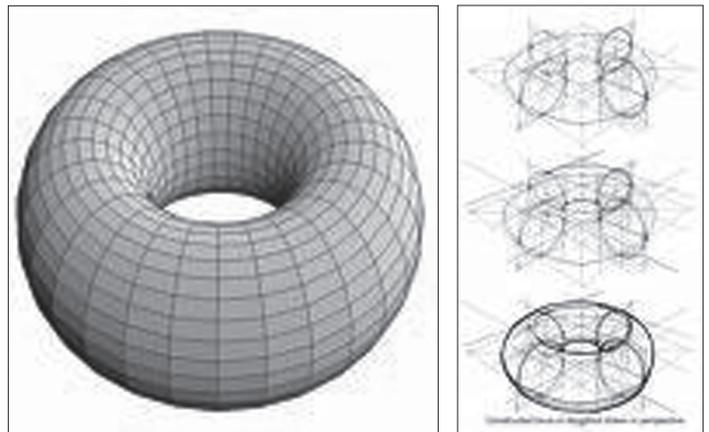


A Torus* Inside Daughter on the Mountaintop

BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Editor's Note: Amy attended a recent TCC retreat given by Carmen Brocklehurst and has written up what Carmen taught for each movement in the hope that others may benefit.

Carmen commented on the torus as connecting the energy between things and between phases within the self. This movement mimics what we are at the atomic level. Let the whole being be awake so it works in harmony. Cross your hands until you make an "X". Feel the polarity between the hands all the way up. Can you simultaneously feel the circle going around the waist? When the hands are in a line at the high point of the movement, just before they cross, feel the dissolution, no-thing, perfect clarity. Then the hands cross, a reconnection comes, clarity moves through your whole being, and new energy is created. Energy pours down after your hands cross and the hands follow it. According to Dr. Karl Pribram, "We only know this world in relation to movement." If you imagine the hands tracing a Kyoto-brown colored jug, what do you feel at the base of the jug? Follow the energy up; follow the "fountain-up feel" between the hands the whole way up. What do you feel when the hands cross? There is a marriage between the self and the Divine; hands then cross and create anew. In your stillness, you are found.



1. A surface generated by rotating a circle about an axis that is in the same plane as the circle but does not intersect it. A torus resembles a donut and is a subtype of toroid –

The American Heritage® Science Dictionary,
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For more information on a torus, see
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torus>.

To see how a torus moves, see
<http://www.dr-mikes-maths.com/4d-torus.html>

Teaching: Nothing More, Nothing Less

By EV HANSON-FLORIN, SIDLESHAM, WEST SUSSEX, UNITED KINGDOM

Daughter on the Mountaintop starts with bent knees; hands are below the waist and palms face each other. With the weight fully on the right foot, move the left heel forward straight out from the bent knee. Shift the weight gradually to the left/front foot while the arms move weightlessly upward from the elbows in opposite circles (right hand counter-clockwise, left hand clockwise) towards the centre of the body. The right hand is further away from the body than the left hand. [(Be careful not to stop the flow of energy at the elbow; allow yourself to feel it through the top of the arm and shoulder.)] As the hands reach the center of the body, the fingers are vertical and the right hand crosses on the outside of the left hand – to gently place the daughter on the mountaintop. The movement is always generated from the *T'a T'ien*, but particularly at this point, the *T'an T'ien* provides the last bit of forward weight shift to the left/front foot while the back heel releases slightly off the ground. Now the weight begins to move back to the back/right foot as the hands move down the centre (fingers vertical) and complete the circle. Repeat this nine times, move the left foot back, and end in a graceful conclusion with hands at your sides, both palms facing the earth. Breathe.

Repeat (with the reverse) on the left side.



A Daughter & the Mountaintop

POEM BY CARRIE SCHAPKER; INTRODUCTION BY MARY SCHAPKER, GALLOWAY, NJ

The younger of my two daughters (both grown and married, one in L.A. and one in the Catskills) has always been interested in pursuing a spiritual path and wanted to learn T'ai Chi Chih. She still practices with me when she comes home, which is too rarely. I often tell her that in my daily practice I include her and her intentions during "Daughter on the Mountaintop" and her sister's intentions during "Daughter in the Valley." She was recently moved to write a poem about that. – MARY

You Inspire Me, Mom

You move in slow circles
slower now than before
no longer chasing small, wild feet.

You have two daughters
valley and mountain
and you hold us both.

Each morning in your living room
two coasts meet in silence
as channels connect
and currents find their ground
distance doesn't matter.

East and west
red and rhythmic
we share the understory
the blood
the warm beating sigh
of life's generosity
giving to itself.

We rely upon your wish
sent outward from soft hands
in the height of summer.

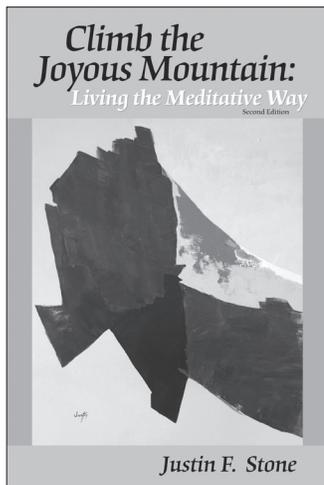
– CARRIE

Climb the Joyous Mountain

Good Karma Publishing is pleased to announce the publication of

Climb The Joyous Mountain: Living the Meditative Way (Second Edition)

By Justin F. Stone



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Great gratitude goes to Donna McElhose and Amy Tyksinski for their manuscript preparation

Climb the Joyous Mountain is just part of the life story of Justin F. Stone, who traveled to Japan by freighter for the first of seven Far East trips in 1963. Over the next decade, he lived and meditated in Buddhist temples with Zen monks; traveled to India, living and meditating with Yogis in the Himalayas; and ventured to Hong Kong and China, meeting preeminent Buddhist scholars. His friend, Zen poet and world traveler, Paul Reps greatly influenced this path from the moment in 1954 that they first met.

If you haven't read Climb the Joyous Mountain recently, you haven't read it.

climbing,
climbing,
climbing –
finally
we
hit ...
bottom!

From the introduction:

"...Once, when I mentioned the many errors in my life to the Bengali teacher, Ramamurti Mishra, he immediately snapped, "Those are not your mistakes." This statement really distinguishes the unreal from the Real, and I am grateful to Mishra for the profound lesson..."

It seems that during much of my adult life I have been the fortunate recipient of many such lessons. When the wife of Zen Priest Ogata gave me a Zen lecture by saying, "Stone-san!" and then slowly letting her folded fist open and unfold as a flower unfolds, it made me want to cry...

Her husband, who spoke excellent English, once

said to me, "Anybody can be the Small Hermit. Be the Big Hermit." Much later, meditating in the foothills of the Himalayas, I thought of this and said to myself, "What am I doing up here being the Small Hermit? I should be able to do this at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street." I am grateful for these two lessons.

...The Buddha spoke of Right Livelihood. However, what is right for me might be wrong for another. How can we tell another what to do? We can ask meaningful questions and we can offer constructive examples, but we cannot define another's life. To try to live what *I AM* seems to make sense. In the eyes of others, it often makes us look like fools...

The anecdotes in this book are not here for the purposes of reminiscing. Rather, they point in the direction of the Joyous Mountain. A leap in the air, a clicking of the heels, or a really delighted laugh beats all the torturous discussion – without a doubt. But still we write books. Does writing books make me a writer? I don't know.

Does writing about the Joyous Mountain make one joyous? I don't know. What do I know? There have been moments at the piano when music flowed like *T'ai Chi Ch'uan* and moments of grace in athletics... Looking back at some moments in the Far East, when I was simply fortunate to be in a particular place, I realize how rich the fabric was (and is). After meditation, sometimes, we feel an inexpressible thankfulness. For what? To whom?

All one can do is bring the palms together in a salute to all beings. May they lose the attachment that makes for suffering. Life can be good – if we plant the proper seeds. The way of joy is best. Climb the Joyous Mountain."

As Carmen Brocklehurst says in the Foreword, Ramana Maharshi said that finding Truth was simple – all we had to do was ask, "Who Am I?" To his great benefit and ours, Justin did not take this edict casually but rather, he gave it his full attention. The chapter entitled "Who Am I?" touches readers to the core. So many spiritual students have worked for years wondering if they would fulfill the prize of spiritual Enlightenment. The poignant passages Justin utilizes this chapter are more like living water than mere words – water that quenches the thirst of parched spiritual students. Justin invites us to drink of the living water and truly live ourselves, our lives."

The Shocking and Uplifting Truth

BY JUSTIN STONE

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

Some people are deep and some are shallow. The deep ones, as soon as they begin to do T'ai Chi Chih and note the effect it has on their lives, realize what TCC is dealing with. It is not exercise, not entertainment, but a way to grasp and use, even unite with, the basic principle of life. Martial arts have used this force to develop violence, and defense against violence, thus making the force itself secondary. TCC has one purpose: to circulate this Vital Force and to balance it, even to unite with it when we reach its Essence. When you begin to realize what you are dealing with, you will not be surprised that TCC affects your life in so many ways.

I am going to quote, again, from the works of Sri Nisargadatta, certainly one of the most original thinkers India has known. His words may shock some people if they go against long-held concepts, but that is the purpose of a spiritual teacher, to shock you out of the rut you have taken for granted. In *The Ultimate Lesson*, Nisargadatta calls it *Chi (Prana)*, or "Life Force," which gives you an idea of what it really is.

"Without the Vital Breath (Life Force, *Prana, Chi, Ishwara*) God has no soul; and, without God, the Vital Breath has no existence," Nisargadatta says. "Without the Vital Force [*Chi*], nobody can worship God. Actually, it is the Vital Breath, the Life Force, which is worshipping God. And, without God, there is no existence of the Vital Breath. When this Life Force seeks the consciousness as God itself, then dawns the light of the consciousness with which the Life Force works and achieves what it wants to achieve – that is, oneness with God. Even if you take the Life Force as God itself, the result will be the same, because the working principle is the Life Force [*Chi*]."

Nisargadatta continues: "When the Life Force carries on without any obstacles [blockages], you have a sense of well-being, you are happy. If there is an obstruction [blockage], you become aware of a disturbance in the

working of the Life Force, and you have a feeling of unwellness and you are unhappy."

Nisargadatta writes for many pages along these lines, but his words only reiterate the importance, even omniscience, of *Chi*. Western Medicine will eventually come to understand the importance of this knowledge, but, as of now, it is [unknown] to so-called symptomatic medicine.

Remember, Nisargadatta is considered one of India's greatest God-men. He is affiliated with no religion, and his references to God are made with the highest respect, even love. In one sense he is trying to tell you about the wonderful opportunity to unite with Consciousness, and this directly concerns TCC. When people realize what TCC is offering, there will be tremendous growth and great need for good and sincere teachers.



JUSTIN STONE, OCTOBER 2005

Varying the Formats

By CLAIRE WHALEN, OSF, BATESVILLE, IN

During the last session of last year's conference, Pam, Sandy, and Antonia challenged us to find new ways and venues to offer T'ai Chi Chih classes. The traditional one-hour-per-week-for-eight-weeks format was not working for folks in my area. Fewer people seemed unable or unwilling to devote eight weeks to learning TCC. My classes often dwindle towards the end of eight weeks, even when students really want to learn TCC. This past winter I offered a beginning class at our local YMCA, but midway through, one person had surgery, another started a new job, and another moved.

Since 2006, I have offered different formats for beginning classes. The weekend sessions start on Friday evenings and run through Sunday at a retreat center at my convent; this format attracts out-of-towners and commuters. I also offer an eight-hour class for one Saturday on two consecutive months. I tend to go on-site to teach this format.

When I offer these intensive formats, I expect participants to purchase Justin's DVD so that they can continue their practice. Most do. I found that students taking these intensive classes actually learn the movements better than those who take once-a-week classes. I think that happens because I include a lot of practice time during the intensive schedule, and I am able to fine-tune the student's movements. Students are also more focused during these sessions.

I've learned a few things from using the above formats. It calls forth creative ways to package my teaching so as to vary input, practice, and rest. It takes a lot of my energy, and it calls for me to pace myself as well as pace my students. (I am 79 years old.) The students do get an increase of energy after they practice their new moves, but at first they are using that energy to do it correctly. Although students seem to learn the movements better, they still rely upon me, or a dvd, to guide their practice. That is why I encourage them to purchase Justin's DVD, which I have available for them to buy. The weeklong class is offered in a retreat setting so there are opportunities for spiritual growth.

T'ai Chi [Chih] Gives Immune System A Boost

HARVARD HEALTH LETTER, FROM JUNE 2007

Fighting off diseases is a young person's game. With age, our immune systems become less nimble and not quite as ruthless. The number of T cells drop. The B cells also start to wind down, making fewer antibodies that respond to outside intruders and more errant ones that turn on the body itself. As a result, even those of us who age gracefully are more vulnerable to getting sick as we tack on the years. What's more, our immune systems don't respond as vigorously to the vaccinations-such as the annual flu shot- that we get to prevent some of those illnesses.

Small studies have yielded some evidence that exercise seems to re-energize the immune system, so when UCLA researchers decided to test whether T'ai Chi [Chih] might do the same, they weren't starting from scratch. On the other hand, the slow, controlled movements of T'ai Chi [Chih] aren't a typical form of exercise.

The study involved 112 healthy people whose average age was about 70. Half of the volunteers were randomly assigned to attend three, 40-minute T'ai Chi [Chih] sessions a week. They were T'ai Chi Chih[.] The control group attended health education classes that included group discussion. After four months both groups were given the chickenpox vaccine, Varivax. The shingles vaccine, Zostavax, wasn't available at the time. The researchers drew blood from the study subjects and conducted tests that assess how active T cells are in response to the chickenpox virus. The tests were done periodically

during the study, which lasted a total of 25 weeks.

The results were reported in the April 2007 issue of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. The T cell activity levels of the T'ai Chi [Chih] group had risen 38% by the end of the study, compared with a 28% increase for people in the control group, although the immunological boost from T'ai Chi [Chih] came mainly before vaccination. After the chickenpox shot, the T cell activity levels of the T'ai Chi [Chih] and the control group went up by about the same amount (14% vs.15%).

The UCLA researchers noted that T'ai Chi [Chih] alone induced an immune response that was comparable to the vaccine. T'ai Chi [Chih] might have a strong effect on the immune system because it manages to bring exercise, relaxation, and meditation together in "one behavioral intervention," the researchers said. They theorized that T'ai Chi [Chih] enhances T cell activity by quieting the nervous system's "fight or flight" response, which can, in certain circumstances, interfere with the immune system.

Note from Diana Wright: The researchers at UCLA, Dr. Michael Irwin and Dr. Jennifer Pike, are aware of the community's disappointment over the media's use of T'ai Chi versus T'ai Chi Chih. They are doing what they can to make sure their press releases and website provide the correct information regarding TCC, including providing a link to our website.

Tools for Teaching TCC – A Lesson in Vibration

By LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

For years, I have enjoyed using a small, palm-sized Tibetan bowl to start my TCC classes. I ring the bowl three times, each time letting the sound travel, so students will stop talking, quiet down, and prepare mentally for TCC meditation. Recently, I have been handing the bowl to a student and asking them to ring the bowl, to bring the class to order.

The first time I offered the bowl, the student held the bowl and dropped the striker into the center of the bowl. It made a dull thud. She looked puzzled and tried it again. Another muted thud. I encouraged her to try striking the side of the bowl. Clunk. Then I suggested that she open her palm and let the bowl sit in her hand. CLING! She smiled. She could feel the vibration in her hand, up her arm. I encouraged her to hold the striker lightly, allowing it to swing like a pendulum. She was surprised to hear the bowl ring clear and long.

I used that “teachable moment” to point out that our bodies are like a singing bowl. When we hold tension in the body, it can’t vibrate; the *Chi* cannot travel unimpeded through the body. In T’ai Chi Chih, we practice the art of letting go. All the students nodded knowingly. Or so I thought.

The next week, another student was given the bowl to ring. This person also had great difficulty getting it to ring clearly. He kept hitting it harder and harder. It was as if this student had to experience this lesson in vibration to really get it. After several unsuccessful attempts, he finally made the bowl sing. I am convinced that each student will benefit from the opportunity to hold the bowl, to manipulate the striker, and to discover on their own the secret of the singing bowl and how it relates to the practice of TCC.

Letting go of tension,
I sink into the flowing practice
of T’ai Chi Chih
and energy vibrations
beginning to manifest in my body.
I feel trembling in the fingertips
and energy flowing up my legs and spine.
I have become the singing bowl.

Joy-ning Mind & Body

By STEPHEN THOMSON, TUPELO, MS

It’s no secret that our culture values thoughts first and feelings last. Typically we Americans listen to and respond to situations from our necks up, leaving the rest of our bodies out of the picture. Unfortunately, this physical habit is as ingrained as the way we breathe or walk. If we wish to improve our odds of surviving in a healthy way, we must listen and respond to the wisdom of our bodies.

When we sink into our T’ai Chi Chih practice, we break that living-in-the-head habit; we bring conscious awareness down from of the ivory towers of our minds and get it in touch with the natural wisdom of our bodies. What could be simpler? We follow the *Chi* until our minds and our bodies begin to flow in movement together. By taking the time to listen to our bodies as we go through our movements, we discover that beneath the illusion of our consciousness, the mind/body is not separated at all but rather one interconnected whole.

Mind needn’t be master to the body, nor does the body desire to be mind’s slave. It’s better for both that they move together. Joy-ning the *yang* of the conscious mind to the *yin* of unconscious body yields wonderful health benefits. How? Ignore the needs of the body and you will frustrate it to no end. Ignore it too much and the body will try to draw attention to its self by sabotaging something, usually

its own health. You can almost hear it say, “Well, if you’re going to treat me like dirt and boss me around, then see how you like it when I do this to you.” On the other hand, a mind that listens to its body is often rewarded by a body that is healthy and at ease. It is amazing how quickly entrenched dis-eases leave, once we become mindful of the whole body and not just the head.

Remember, consciousness goes much deeper than one’s head. A mind that is soft and in the flow knows that consciousness’ roots travel down into the soles of the feet. When you teach T’ai Chi Chih, teach the joy-ning of mind and body by example; move both in one accord; bring the awareness down; flow when you move; teach no-thought, listen and speak to feelings – the body’s natural language. One by one your students will follow your lead and discover how to move in a delightful way – where every fiber in their being moves as one – and something magical starts to happen to them. Their bodies will begin responding positively to the new way of living and reward them with good health.



Serenity in the Falling Snow

Seijaku Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst in Albuquerque, NM; June 14, 2008

By JUDY HENDRICKS, HOST

It looked like it was snowing outside – in June, in New Mexico – during the Seijaku workshop. Giant cottonwood trees were releasing their cotton, which the wind carried all around us. Carmen Brocklehurst lovingly shared her wealth of experiential knowledge about the practice, and Justin spoke about its power.

I remember how much I loved my first Seijaku class, and so I often wonder why I don't practice more often. Knowing that changes may occur more quickly with Seijaku, I wonder if I am resistant to change. That may well be, but as I feel compelled to mediate, I also feel compelled to do Seijaku.

I learned so much during the one-day workshop, but it's hard to put it into words. While doing Car-

ry the Ball to the Side, I really felt the Chi flowing around my waist during the hip swivel. Since then, the shifting of the weight and the hip swivel seem to flow more smoothly. We have all heard about how TCC teaches you TCC, but I think Seijaku teaches us at a faster rate. Seijaku also makes my TCC practice – and my life – much softer. After doing the “strong” part of Seijaku, the softness and flow of TCC comes more easily. Seijaku has also taught me how to let go. Some negative and unfair things are happening at work, but I have recently gained a clarity and calmness about it. I had been quite angry about the work situation, but after doing Seijaku, the situation now feels more positive. I don't know if I can change things, but I do know I can let myself just “be.”

Since the workshop, as I have been practicing Seijaku more often, the practice has become more natural. On the days when my schedule is freer, I hear myself saying, “Do Seijaku.” Things are so much clearer and settled after spending the day doing Seijaku. As in TCC, the power of Seijaku seems cumulative. Thank you to Carmen and Justin for sharing the serenity with those of us so fortunate to attend the workshop.



From All Directions

Retreat with Antonia Cooper in Albuquerque, NM; April 3-6, 2008

By CONNIE HYDE, CEDAR CREST, NM

We met as a group of virtual strangers, but our common bond was that we love practicing T'ai Chi Chih. This magnet drew us to the Dominican Spiritual Renewal Center in the Rio Grande valley for the 3rd Annual TCC Retreat with Sister Antonia. When questioned by Antonia as to why we had come, answers came from all directions – to renew an appreciation for the practice, to soften the grieving for a loved one, to feel the flow of the Chi in group practice.

Graced by a visit from Justin, the simplicity of practice greeted us anew. He advised teachers to demonstrate the movement rather than using words to describe it. Under Antonia's guidance, punctuated by readings from *Spiritual Odyssey*, we were encouraged to embody the principles of TCC. She advised us, “You're entering into an experience so be sure you leave enough time for your practice.” Antonia's love for TCC and the community was palpable.

The retreat was a time to grow, feel, reflect on early spring, and to revisit our human being-ness. Thank you, Justin, for the gift that keeps on giving.

World T'ai Chi – Chi Quong Day in San Francisco; April 26, 2008

By LOIS ARRIGOTTI, HALF MOON BAY, CA

Michael and Faith Isaacs hosted a practice in Golden Gate Park to celebrate World T'ai Chi Day. On a day when the Rose Garden was sunny, warm, and bright, our group was diverse and included beginning and experienced TCC students, TCC teachers, and a T'ai Chi Chu'an instructor. The community dedicated the practice in loving compassion and with good will to all people on earth.



Creating Space

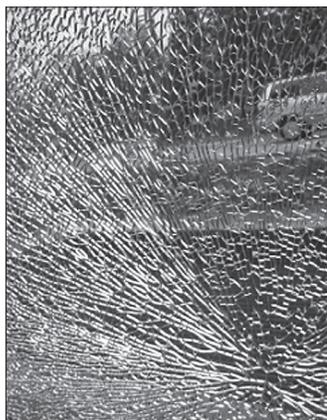
Workshop with Antonia Cooper in Omaha, NE;
March 30-31, 2008

By RITA OTIS, HOST

Meister Eckhart, a 12th century mystic, tells us the divine is not found by a process of addition but by a process of subtraction. This process could also be called “creating space.” When I teach a class I am especially aware of creating a space for students to explore their bodies with movement. When we create sacred space those that need to show up will show up, and what needs to happen will happen.

Last November Lorraine Lepine suggested that we have a workshop in either Kansas City or Omaha the end of March since Sister Antonia would be close by. Opening to the idea, I decided to just let this workshop be another opportunity to create space. The response was incredible; it was very much like “build it and they will come.” Forty people signed up for the workshop – some came from far away; some were teachers and others were students; some were friends of students and others came to T'ai Chi Chih for the first time. They all gathered in Omaha.

Of course, I did some preparation for the workshop – planning a schedule, buying supplies, rearranging furniture at the church. But the main thing I did was hosting. Hosting is creating non-threatening space for people to be comfortable. People need to know what is going to happen, and they need to know they can be who they really are without being judged. Once those things are in place, each person's individual story (including my own) will play out the way it is supposed to.



Creating space also means you will be surprised. Something will show up that you did not expect. In fact, if you are not surprised, you may not have opened the space enough; perhaps there's too much holding and thinking. The surprise may be feeling joy or seeing things in a different light. Not all surprises will be subtle; some may be very dramatic. During our workshop as we gently moved, one of the double pane windows shattered.

The glass stayed in the frame, but the cracks and shapes showed the intensity of our energy. What a visible sign of the *Chi*!

When we practice TCC individually, we also create space. We first set aside a time for practice. We take time apart from the busyness

of the day, and we take a mental break as well as a physical one. We then practice the form with awareness not judgment. From there it is all about getting out of the way.

AS LAO TSU SAYS IN CHAPTER ELEVEN OF THE *TAO TE CHING*:

“Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub; it is the center hole that makes it useful. Shape clay into a vessel; it is the space within that makes it useful.

Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which make it useful.

Therefore profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there.”

COMMENTS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

“TCC has become a daily activity since my first workshop. It goes hand in hand with my Zen meditation practice. I've also started reading *Spiritual Odyssey* and *Meditation for Healing*, both by Justin Stone. One can really see how much Justin is rooted in Zen. I would especially recommend *Spiritual Journey* to anyone. It is a treasure for daily spiritual reading at any stage of training or practice.”

– M. FA JIAN MELCHIZEDEK, OHY

“I am practicing TCC and it is really improving my balance. I also experienced some rather stunning medical improvements after the first class. I am reading the [photo text] book, listening to [Justin Stone Speaks on TCC], and working with the [instructional] video. I knew that I needed this; it just took a long time to get hooked up.”

– DAN HIRSCH

“Wow, what an awesome and inspiring time. Between the vibrations of the bells and our vibrations, the intensity of the practice and *Chi* broke through. It had to be liberated, moved, set about in motion; it was very powerful for me. I actually saw a flash of light just as it hit, which I don't care to analyze. I am just enjoying it. Today I'm noticing that my metabolism is different, and my face looks different too. I feel very different.” – MARYANN CALTA



April Snow Brings 11 New Teachers Into The Community

Teacher Training with Pam Towne in St. Paul, MN; April 7-12, 2008

By CAROL MOCKOVAK, Co-Host

The weather was strange, with snow falling in April. It was even unusual for Minnesota. But just as every snowflake has its own unique pattern, each of the 11 candidates brought his or her own special gifts and talents to the teacher training.

During their presentations candidates addressed diverse audiences. They ranged from an artist's cooperative to staff members at a mental health day treatment program; from nurses and social workers in a hospital setting to residents in senior housing; from employees at a company picnic to people with hearing losses; from parents of small children to school administrators; from arthritis sufferers to volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. The diversity is an indication of the expanding range of T'ai Chi Chih and how the candidates valued the practice in their own lives.

Here are some words from those who moved softly through spring snows to blossom into teaching flowers at week's end.

This morning
I watched a snowplow
As it disturbed little
pathways
In God's frosty kiss
On the earth
Last night.
— HARRY DIECKMANN

"I like the old Indian saying that 'Certain things catch your eye, but pursue only those that capture your heart.' TCC has captured my heart." — DEB BERTELSEN

"I have a greater appreciation of the center, the place from where movements are directed." — MARIAN BYSTROM

Sitting on the Mountain Top
Receptive and repose
Enfolded in thy patient love
A sacred place unfolds.
Like little lights
Sparks of thy heart
Flow from center
Detach, depart, disperse. — BETH PRESTON

"When I gave my presentation on Friday morning, I was more anxious than I thought I would be. I was also calmer than I thought I would be." — KIP KIPPLEY



"A total feeling of fresh air was added to my practice." — Mary J. Case

"I would like to plant seeds of joy in as many people as possible by teaching TCC." — YUKO VOSS

"I feel as if I'm rooted to each and every person that was here for this beautiful journey of ours." — COLLEEN SIKEL

"I am so grateful for the TCC family. I felt completely at home and at peace." — ANDREA COLE

"I have never experienced being in a group where so much love energy was flowing." — BEV RADEMACHER

"The week started somewhat stressfully, but teachers and fellow students shared their loving *Chi* to make the experience so very positive." — GINGER WEISSER

Retreat with Antonia Cooper in St. Louis, MO; April 1-2, 2008

By SUSAN KISSINGER, Host

Eight teachers, twenty-one students, and five beginners joined together to deepen our T'ai Chi Chih practice. No single word adequately expresses the experience; perhaps unity comes closest. Other words that bubbled up for participants include: attentive, accepting, and awesome; hopeful, wonderful, joyful, and delightful; freeing, healing, calming, and flowing; wondrous, radiant, oneness, and watery; peaceful, vital, tranquil, and grateful.

I was touched by the profound simplicity of Antonia's words and the stillness of her presence, which so clearly guided our inner journeys. Arms softened as Antonia spoke of the yin/yang symbol, with the black dot within the white and the white within the black. Knees softened as we grounded through the soles of our feet, connecting with earth energy. Our empty cups were filled with wisdom and joyful movement.



Mondo's Movement & Climbing Mountains

FRANCESCO "MONDO" MONDINI, ITALY (STUDENT OF CRISTINA MINELLI)

Francesco became one of TCC's 11 new Italian teachers, accredited near Montova, Italy in August 2006. Mondini is a ski instructor, competitor, climber, kite surfer, and resort activity director. Thanks to Dan Pienciak and Renza Moscatelli Baker for help in translating.

I walk up the hill – scarcely five minutes above my home – during days of almost perfect weather, to relax and do some T'ai Chi Chih. I gaze toward Mount Baldo, with its sharp summit, its radiance slicing through high misty clouds with a thousand colorful hues. The temperature suddenly changes and the air is beautifully cool.



I write to you about the satisfaction and joy that TCC gives me, about the awareness and confidence that it brings in everyday life, during professional activities, during times of relaxation and reflection, in my personal rapport with others, and in my social life. I am very happy because, after completing the teacher training week in Mantova (with endless gratitude to Sandy, Cristina, and Daniel), my TCC movements are more soft and flowing, more smooth and natural, more round and free.

After Rocking Motion I feel more relaxed and rebalanced. With the very first steps in the forward and back movements, the *Chi* begins to flow from the *T'an T'ien* throughout my body. Polarity is felt between my hands and gives me the feeling of softly stroking the air.

Last spring, after fifteen years of mountain climbing, I became aware that even though I climbed with composure, it would cause fatigue to reach 30-35 meters. When coming upon very high and steep cliffs, there should be no slackening of the resistant strength. This is also true on a delicate pass, with its illusory and brief timing of balance, with the last hold gone and with only a three-meter rope to help the footing. Climbing a smooth and terribly vertical slab to reach the top, it is essential to move slowly, with continuity and precision, with flow and intelligence, with balance and decisiveness, moving freely and naturally. Mountain climbing is the slowest sport and activity in the world. And it is normal that it should be so.

Climbing or walking to a mountain summit requires certain physical and mental efforts. It requires control and flexibility of the pelvis and hips, feet and ankles, static and dynamic posture, with great determination at the right moment. TCC helps me feel more secure and ready to go forward. As the Zen statement says, "When you reach the summit, continue to climb."

TCC has also gives me gifts for use in competitive skiing. It helps me rapidly evaluate situations and execute technical movements with great precision. It helps me be aware and in constant control so that I may make immediate corrections of the body's movement. It has increased my consciousness about my limitations, my joy in the realization of my achievements, and the desire to share with friends. I have greater imagination in the application of the movements and great freedom of expression. When everything is okay, I free myself from the plan, follow my instincts, my breath, and let my great passion for this activity lead me. TCC helps me enormously as a sportsman, a route made of sensations and perceptions, attempts and tests, discoveries and emotions.

A God created the mountains
 And the gullies covered with snow
 And above all he created the physical laws
 For which everything that goes up
 Will then come down,
 But in doing so
 You can choose the way of the gullies
 And of the snow
 And so you can discover that the soul
 Does not know other forces or laws
 But freedom and emotions

I also practice TCC to relax and *detendermi* psychologically, to recoup fresh energies, to interact well with people (even unpleasant ones).

I am extremely grateful to TCC creator Justin Stone for these movements. I am very happy to be an accredited instructor, but egoistically speaking, I am also very glad to practice TCC for the benefits that I get from it. I look forward to organizing classes and teaching these movements to new people and friends – to give them this instrument of serenity, wellbeing, and knowledge of oneself in their search of spirituality. Ciao.

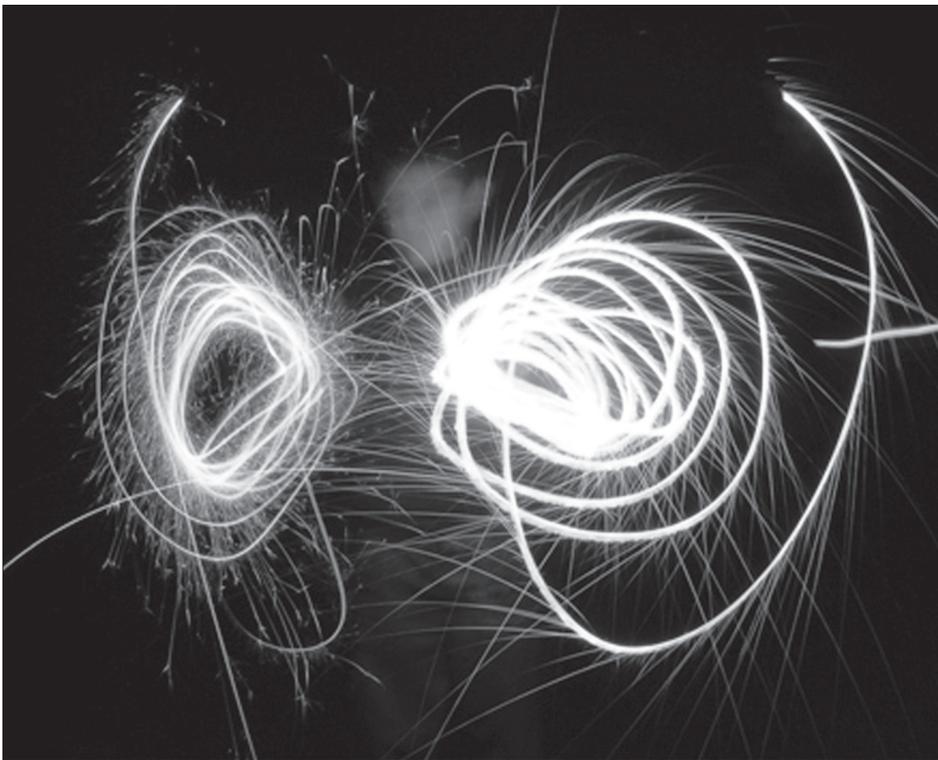
On The Way With Strength

By BETTY J. ROBERSON, YORK, PA (STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

Two years ago on a cold winter's day, I attended my first TCC class – what excitement! Prior to enrolling, I lived a sedentary lifestyle because of health reasons. Rigorous exercise was out of the question. On most days, I sat at home with my recreation of choice: lap quilting. But I knew that I needed to move my body. Also, because I cannot go to work, I cared for sick children, let in repairmen, and ran errands on weekdays for family and friends. I didn't mind helping, but my time was no longer my own; I was ready for a new adventure. So my daughter went online and found a TCC class in my hometown. I was pleased to find its nice size class and my teacher. Hope Spangler's introduction to TCC made me want to learn more. I had to become more selfish with my time; I felt I deserved that. I practiced morning and night, day in and day out. As I kept with it, I noticed that TCC began to relieve stress and tension. After one month with TCC, I slept better and heard the doctor's report, "Keep doing whatever you're doing!"

Almost two years into the practice, I'm considering becoming accredited as an instructor. I know I've come a long way. TCC brings a sense of well being to my life and in my world.

From Hope Spangler: Betty has benefited from TCC on so many levels; she absolutely loves and is devoted to her practice. TCC has brought a new dimension to her life and expanded her horizons immeasurably.



Wordlessly Moving Beyond Imitation

By MAYBELLE FILLER, SITKA, AK (STUDENT OF NANCY JO BLEIER)

What am I doing? It's a cold Saturday morning and I'm completely underdressed for the occasion. It started to snow as I started heading to the site. I'm not even sure if I can follow along, and no one will be offering verbal instruction during this T'ai Chi Chih session.

The class started months ago, when I thought I was just trying another activity offered to SEARHC employees. I checked it out partly because of my job as a health educator in the Diabetes Prevention Program, partly out of curiosity, partly because I'd heard that TCC

might lower my stress, and partly because I knew the teacher and had told her I'd be there. Living in Seattle and working near the international district, I would see people doing TCC in the park. Wordlessly, gracefully, in synch. I'd always wondered how they knew what to do if no one exchanged a word.

As I looked around at the students attending the first session, I recognized some and not others. I was nervous but excited. I remember those first sessions vividly, wondering if I could memorize the steps while remembering to breathe and remain

quiet. I wondered whether an active person like myself could actually be calm enough to do the moves *and really take them in*. I especially wanted to lose my feelings of self-consciousness. My worries were for naught. I found that, although the experience wasn't as physical as playing softball, the mental aspects required just as much involvement. Moves were done consciously and with concentration. And I began to enjoy the deliberate actions.

So that's how I find myself outside on a very cold Saturday morning, doing these deliberate, conscious, and concentrated moves. Wordlessly following and moving beyond imitation – towards more awareness of what my body and mind could do together.

Friendlier, Nicer, More Open-Minded

By PAULA RIVERS, COLUMBIA, MD (STUDENT OF SHARON SIRKIS)

I had the good fortune to register for T'ai Chi Chih classes at Tai Sophia Institute with Sharon Sirkis during her 10-week session in the fall of 2007. Sharon makes every effort to be sure her students' focus is on several important concepts: being grounded, softness and continuity, and moving from the *T'an T'ien*.

Although I am Caucasian, I have always been interested in Eastern culture. I have studied Eastern brushwork for almost two decades and continue to utilize the brush strokes and experience gained from my lessons in my personal artwork. I have visited China and watched T'ai Chi Chu'an being practiced in the local woods. I am not a physician, but I have researched Eastern medicine and find its philosophy to be wholesome and sensible.

So I registered for TCC classes at Tai Sophia Institute with a sense of curiosity as well as an interest in its effect on my wellbeing. What a pleasant surprise. Sharon taught us carefully and well. I found TCC to be soothing and mind-broadening. I became more open-minded at work and was generally more relaxed at home and at work.

I utilized the movements one night after witnessing a horrendous accident on the highway. Although I was not personally injured, I developed a terrible headache and was stressed as if I had actually been involved. In the moment, my only thought was, "Do some TCC. Maybe it will calm you down." Calm me down it did! I was most grateful for the knowledge imparted to me by Sharon. As I reported to the class the next week, performing TCC was like taking medicine.

Since completing the classes, I have continued to practice each morning and afternoon. I perform the movements in the morning in order to be a nice person to work with during the day. And I perform them before dinner to virtually guarantee that I'll sleep that night. In general, I find that I'm friendlier (not that I am a grouch, you understand) and more able to consider others' ideas. I also notice that if I'm tired from yard work or huffing and puffing from house-cleaning, that a little TCC is soothing and relaxing. I have Sharon to thank for my wellbeing.

Row, Flow, Let Go

By LARRY BLOOM, ATLANTA, GA (STUDENT OF SHERYL ADAIR)

This quote, from world-class rower Craig Lambert's book, *Mind over Water*, describes my internal state of Rocking Motion: "Rowers have a word for this frictionless state: swing... Recall the pure joy of riding on a backyard swing, an easy cycle of motion, the momentum coming from the swing itself. The swing carries us; we do not force it. We pump our legs to drive our arc higher, but gravity does most of the work. We are not so much swinging as being swung. The boat swings you. The shell wants to move fast: speed sings in its lines and nature. Our job is simply to work with the shell, to stop holding it back with our thrashing struggles to go faster. Trying too hard sabotages boat speed. Trying becomes striving and striving undoes itself... Swing is a state of arrival."

As I practice, I get an occasional feeling of something special. It is as if the *Chi* swings me; I don't swing the *Chi*. The *Chi* wants to circulate through our bodies. Could it be that our job with T'ai Chi Chih is simply to work with our bodies in a way as to stop holding back the flow of *Chi*? Alan Watts said, "We don't live life, life lives us." So it is with the *Chi*.



The Lighter Side

One of my students got right and left mixed up during Pulling Taffy. I told him not to worry, that I wasn't going to call the T'ai Chi Chih police. As I demonstrated the move again, I explained it was more important how he moved (with softness and continuity). He noticed my fluttering fingers and thought that was really cool; he wanted to copy it. I gently told him that wasn't a good idea, and before I had a chance to finish, another student said, "We'll have to call the flutter police."

– BY SHARON SIRKIS (COLUMBIA, MD)

Before TCC class began an eager student said, "I'm so looking forward to this class, my feet can't wait to take my shoes off!"

– BY SHARON SIRKIS (COLUMBIA, MD)

Many times it's a challenge to get beginners to understand the importance of practice. So I was thrilled to hear that one of my students, who works in a school system, practiced TCC when she found a few moments to herself in the gymnasium. When a young student saw what she was doing, he confidently stated, "My mom teaches that ... and you're doing it *all* wrong!" No wonder it can be difficult to get students to practice sometimes.

– BY DEBBIE COLE, SEVERN, MD

Marian Bystrom took Pam Towne's advice literally about visualizing four dimes on the soles of her feet. (And teacher Laurie Jacobi helped us confirm that with a bird's eye view.) Marian applied stickers to the soles of her practice shoes to represent the dimes. Marian was accredited this spring at age 85, and as far as we know, she is the old-

est person to be accredited. Interestingly, Judy George (her primary teacher) was also the primary teacher of the youngest person to be accredited, Ned Branigan, accredited at age 17.

– BY CAROL MOCKOVAK



She's got dimes on the soles of her feet.

T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WITH WHOM	WHERE	CONTACT
2008			
Oct. 15	Teacher Prep Workshop (for teachers & students) w/ Sandy	St. Louis, MO	Susan Kissinger joythrumovement@sbcglobal.net 314-647-7832
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
Nov. 21-24	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Albuquerque, NM TCC Center	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com 505-292-5114
2009			
Feb. 3-6	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Pam Towne pamtowne@sbcglobal.net 877-982-4244
Apr. 2-5	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Albuquerque, NM Spiritual Renewal Center	Christa Keller Christa_Keller@comcast.net 505-899-3873
June 23-26	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Tony Johansen trjohansen@msn.com 805-687-1045

MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

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

2008			
Aug. 8-10	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
Late Oct.	TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Edmonton, Canada	Margo Carpenter margocarpenter@gmail.com 780-435-0714

Contacts

ORIGINATOR
Justin Stone
P.O. Box 23212
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1212

GUIDE
Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF
99 Harrison Ave.
North Plainfield, NJ 07060-3606
908-370-3616
antoniaTCC9@aol.com

TEACHER TRAINER
Sandy McAlister
24835 Second St.
Hayward, CA 94541
510-582-2238
mcalister19@comcast.net

TEACHER TRAINER
Pam Towne Duncan
234 Hoover St.
Oceanside, CA 92054
760-722-9544
pamtowne@sbcglobal.net

OUTREACH COORDINATOR
Lorraine Lepine
913-901-8818
thevitalforce2@yahoo.com
(ask for unpublished teacher resources URL)

THE VITAL FORCE - SUBMISSIONS
tcc@kimgrant.com

THE VITAL FORCE - SUBSCRIPTIONS
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Mary Ruiz
The Vital Force
P.O. Box 92674
Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674
vfjmembership@yahoo.com

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