

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin's Words

Attitudes BY JUSTIN STONE

In whatever undertaking one attempts, the attitude with which he starts is all-important. If he wants to learn to play the piano, he must prepare to spend hours in practice – without undergoing the boredom of hours given to the attempt to get to where he enjoys the beauty of playing Chopin or Charlie Parker. It may take long hours of practice to develop a good backhand in tennis, or any skill that one wishes to perfect. Therefore, motivation when beginning some undertaking (such as learning a foreign language) will have a good deal to do with the success of this undertaking.



Granted, some will obviously have more talent than others, but our attitude will contribute to our success.

It always amazes me that Hitler was able to inculcate the German people with the anti-Semitism on which their unity was based. The same thing can be said for the attitude that enabled the American South to turn to slavery as a way of life – the willingness to use the suffering of others to contribute to a “happy” way of life for some. Such an attitude is unthinkable.

To one who steals or cheats in order to make money, I can only assure him that it will not work, although it may seem to do so for a while. If one believes in Karma, then he or she will know that he or she will be repaid in full eventually.

One's attitude toward his fellow men will go a long way to determine his success in this life. One time, as I entered the post office, I saw a young man leaving through the door wearing a most astounding sweatshirt. Emblazoned on it was the saying “I don't give a ---- what you think of me!” I felt sorry for him. With such an attitude, what could life bring him? Such defiance is a sure way to bring unhappiness. What could have brought him to this level of thinking, to this attitude?

It helps to believe in what you undertake. If you really want to succeed, it will help to motivate yourself to learn a foreign language and experience the joy of communication with other human beings.

At this moment I am not experiencing good health, but I have the attitude that I must contribute something worthwhile in this little piece, something approaching the attitude of love.

Something For Everyone

WEB SITE:

It's done!!!!!! Please visit taichichih.org. Regular monthly site updates will now be done through our consulting web designer. Submit your changes by the first of the month and information will be uploaded within a few days. As a reminder, *all* teachers are welcome to submit calendar events for upcoming retreats and workshops. We will also have a space on the site for folks to download information about events. The VF thanks Lisa Thorburn, our web mistress, who has been a dedicated servant of TCC.

TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS:

As Justin says of the letters he has received: 90 percent of practitioners have been changed by T'ai Chi Chih. Tell us how you have been touched. *The Vital Force* is only as vital as your contributions, and we think it gets more vital with each issue!

Some have written asking why their articles did not appear in the last edition.

It's about balancing voices and shaping content into a cohesive journal – within confines of space. Rest assured that all submissions are considered for future editions.

TO STUDENTS:

The Vital Force is as much for you as it is for teachers! In fact, your experiences are vital to reminding teachers why they teach in the first place. We value your voice and want it to ring loudly and clearly.

TO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:

Because of space limitations, *The Vital Force* will generally only run one specific article from each event with one photo. This does not mean that people cannot (and should not) write a *general* article about what they've experienced. It just doesn't have to be done in the context of an actual event summary.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM



www.taichichih.org

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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)
April 1	Early May	Release (Abandon Hope)	Bass Drum
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

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What If? ... We Are One

By MALINDA MENKE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Sometimes I play the game, *What If. What if* I had done *this* rather than *that*? *What if* I hadn't been willing to try something new, and instead of enrolling in my first T'ai Chi Chih class, I had signed up for something familiar – aerobics or yoga? *What if* I hadn't embraced TCC and been open to all that the *Chi* and my teacher, Carmen Brocklehurst, had to give? *What if* I had closed the door when Carmen encouraged me to go deeper in my TCC practice by moving forward with teacher prep classes and teacher training? I can only make assumptions about the ways in which my life might be different if I had made other choices, because each decision is a branch with many branches extending from it, and each of those branches leads to...well, you get the idea.

During the recent teacher training, I was so moved by the presentations and personal stories of my fellow students, and I kept thinking how we were all so very different. But during the week of instruction and intensive TCC practice, once we were truly able to “let go” and open to the *Chi*, the layers of difference peeled away. And in the ways that really matter, we were the same. On the last day of training, I didn't go to lunch with the group because I wanted to run a couple errands, and as I sat at a red light at a busy Albuquerque intersection, watching all of the people in their cars, I wondered what was happening in each of their lives at that moment. As they went about doing what needed to be done, were they angry, or happy, or sad, or lonely, or grieving? Then I heard

the voice inside say, “You are all one.” On an intellectual level, I've always believed in the interconnectedness of life, that each and every life is valuable. But this experience surpassed the confirmation of a belief. I felt a web of energy connecting us all, and coupled with the flow of *Chi* along my spine, I began to smile from ear to ear. I found myself saying out loud, “We are one! We are *one*!” And then I thought, “How cool is this?” Clarity came suddenly, unexpectedly, not when I was doing my TCC practice, not when I was contemplating life, but while I'm sitting in my car on a busy city street waiting for the light to change from red to green!

What if I hadn't enrolled in my first TCC class and been open to the *Chi*? I'm certain my life wouldn't be as rich or as meaningful. This gentle, intelligent Energy has nourished my compassion for others, rekindled my sense of wonder of all that is, and given me untold moments of Joy. In this New Year, may we all be open to the gifts of this Divine Energy, the *Chi*, and may we rededicate ourselves to our practice.



Open-Hearted Teacher Training

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Becoming a TCC teacher requires that candidates come to the training with a willingness to be open, on all levels, to the training.

It seems so basic. But it is not always easy. Without openness, none of the following would be possible.

*I am still
unfolding
corrections
received from
Justin at my
training*

I was inspired and grateful to attend the training because the candidates were of such high character.

Their respect for Justin and TCC came from a deep level. One student said she felt Justin before he even *entered* the room. Each correction made by Justin was not just for the actual movement (and moment), but it was a valuable gem that would be useful throughout the teacher's life and benefit them *and* their students. I am *still* unfolding corrections received from Justin at my training. It is wonderful to be in “beginners mind,” when candidates are changing in such accelerated ways – as are the auditors. This inspires gratitude for the openness, courage, patience, and love that they shared. The benefits of attending a training are incredible.

As a teacher who sent candidates, I watched each one give all they had ... and then went beyond what they imagined. They were open to the process. They helped me to see, again and again, why I thought they would be very good teachers and a special part of our community. I was also grateful to auditors who shared so many helpful suggestions (from the depth of their love and experience) with each candidate. I will always treasure the week because of the candidates' willingness to be open, to love, and to share the *Chi*.

Alternating Currents Of Giving & Receiving

By PETER GREGORY, CROWN POINT, IN

The first time I sat down to write about openness, I knew I would hit some walls, dredge up old behaviors for reflection, and share with others about myself. I responded like the groundhog confused by his own shadow: I put down my pen and took a nap!

I have no business writing about openness. I've been the small, conflicted hermit for much of my life. Before TCC, openness eluded me. I mean, I could see it or describe it in something else, like completing a full practice is like a daily karmic bonfire cooking or music, or the deep gaze of a Compassionate Sage. But the capacity to live and let live against a backdrop of openness was beyond me.

I believe we all experience neurological disorders in our evolution. It's a matter of degree, and of which shallow grooves become habitual patterns, which in time create our deepest tendencies. When exaggerated or prolonged, these mis-firings grow stronger. Turmoil enuses.

What kept me from embracing openness was the development of Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder (OCD). With OCD, you quickly get Stuck on Stuck, with rapid recurring thoughts convincing you that impending doom is around the corner if you don't follow through with a repeating message. It's like a high stakes game

of Simon Says. As a child, I was a cross between a vaudeville mime and a third base coach in baseball. Winking, blinking, tapping my left wrist between the eyes, jumping in place without being noticed, pulling my hair out, on and on. Every activity had a sequence of useless gestures that had to be followed before I could begin. What was first experienced as pleasant and/or harmless would become routine and normal, then rational and necessary. As I got older, this progressed to consumption. Sugar, fat, caffeine, or alcohol, the result was the same: guilty pleasure becomes routine and normal, then rational and necessary. It was like having a sixth wavelength in my brain. There wasn't much space for openness to flourish in my "hard-wired" chaos.

But somehow it did, like a lone flower in the desert, and I began learning and practicing T'ai Chi Chih. Justin's suggestion, to let go like a man who has no job, home, or partner to hold onto, was especially liberating. Being able to complete full practices without any OCD flare-ups was like a daily karmic bonfire, revealing more and more openness every time the smoke would clear. Thank you, Justin.

In my practice, I regard openness as an alternating current of giving and receiving, leading to wider paths of less resistance. At rest, I'm most mindful of the angle of my feet, the looseness in my wrists, and the slight elongation of my spine. In motion, my potential for openness rests in my ability to move from the T'an T'ien, to abide in the hub and not the spokes.

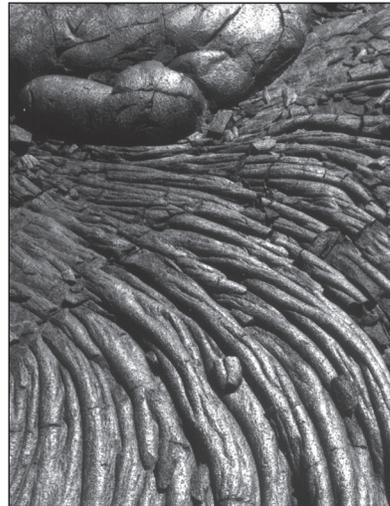
I see openness as dynamic, like a dilating pupil, discerning darkness within the darkness. It is both the means and the end, to understanding the mystery of the Supreme Ultimate.

Transition With Ease: How TCC Parallels Life

By MARGERY ERICKSON, HANOVER, PA

After 22 years of teaching special education for one public school, I decided it was time for a new challenge. I was ready and open. Balancing having a secure job with the willingness to let go and find a new direction was an easy choice. The process began six months before the new job actually materialized. First came the mental image: teaching math to learning support students in a high school setting. Second came applying and interviewing.

Daily TCC practice was at the center of this transition. Practice provided me with confidence, clarity, and quiet assurance. As I look back the change went very smoothly. I am very happy in the new school. I am teaching high school algebra to students with emotional and learning disabilities. What I enjoy most is connecting with the students by providing support, kind words, and even some positive *Chi*.



This recent shift brings me back to TCC. What are the actual benefits to daily practice? Perhaps they include a healthy body, inner serenity, and mental (math) clarity? Being open within the TCC form creates a willingness to be open to new ideas and new challenges throughout the day and life.

Open To Balancing Joy & Movement

By RON RICHARDSON, TUPELO, MS

An attractive feature of T'ai Chi Chih is its subtitle "Joy Thru Movement." In fact, this has been the driving force behind my practice of TCC for the past eight years. Somewhere along the way during more recent months, I have become aware of the possibility that the *joy* could get lost if we overly immerse ourselves in events where we focus entirely on trying to improve the way we do TCC.

*balancing
the need
to improve
with 'just
doing it'*

I was the only teacher here in Mississippi for most of the eight years of my practice. Within the last couple of years, five more enthusiastic TCC teachers have surrounded me and want to get it down to a science. This is not a criticism. I am glad to see it. It's just that this presence of new eager teachers has helped bring about an awareness of something missing in my more recent practices. Added to this, I attended the 2007 Conference where there was a heavy emphasis (as always) on improvement. I then came home to attend an area retreat. Again, emphasis was on improving the practice. I began to think, "Something is out of balance. I am losing some of the joy that comes with the movement." Do not misunderstand me. Refinements are very important to me. During the 2007 Conference I joked with Sandy McAlister about waiting for someone to tap me on the shoulder to inform me about something I was not doing exactly *right*. There was some seriousness to that.

I want improve my TCC movements. But there comes a time, as the commercial says, when we need to "just do it" and not be so concerned about trying to improve our movements. Maybe a better balance can come between joy-and-movement as we balance the need to improve-and-just-do-it. Perhaps this can happen if we practice TCC apart from our classes, or, even in classes ... just do it from time to time without being concerned about teaching.



The Yang Component Of Openness

By STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

Justin often talks of *vashanas*, or habit energies. Habit energies help us cope, but all too often *vashanas* serve as barriers to *prajna*, our inherent wisdom. Daily clearing our minds through T'ai Chi Chih practice ultimately allows us to be more open – to see with a clearer mind, one that is free of yesterday's clutter. If we want to be open and receptive, we must allow the *Chi* to soften our *vashanas*.

You may think openness is passive receptivity; it isn't. Openness contains within it a highly active property – an extraordinary mindfulness, a precursor to change. Unfortunately our habit energies blind us to the infinite opportunities hovering just past the threshold of our everyday consciousness. To see and think more clearly, follow your *Chi* inward when you move. Consciousness will clear, barriers will soften, and *prajna* will open you to previously unseen possibilities.

To be open we would do well to cultivate a mind that is willing to question everything – what Zen people call a beginner's mind. That doesn't mean we have to go around questioning every little thing every minute of the day; it's just an acknowledgement of how little we actually know for certain of this universe. Beginner's mindfulness opens us up, directing us upward to a higher state where we're allowed a greater understanding of self, of others, and of situations once foreign to us.

In Justin's book *Spiritual Odyssey* (pg. 125), he says, "Self-discipline demands that we see things as they are, not the way we want them to be or the way they appear to deluded thinking." Through such clear-mindedness Justin developed T'ai Chi Chih in 1974, which is a revolutionary change in the history of moving meditation, one that revealed a new truth, a soft but strong inward-path. It is Justin's legacy to this world.

A commitment to staying open and inquisitive in our own lives will lead to new revelations and personal truths – truths that we will hopefully, for the sake of our growth, remain open to question. So, let the yang *Chi* component of openness shake you out of your *vashanas* of complacency; allow openness to renew your mind and bring into the light all that your knowing-something-for-certain-mind has hidden from you. Follow the *Chi*.

*self-
discipline
demands that
we see things
as they are
(-- J. Stone)*

Peace And All Good!

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

Wishing each of you a Happy Chinese New Year – at the beginning of the Lunar New Year that falls on February 7th in this year of the rat. Many of our Asian brothers and sisters will be observing this time of change, much like those who make New Year's resolutions on January 1st. What changes will this new year hold for each of us?

One thing is for sure: We do not have to think up what they could be, but we can allow them to evolve. My wish for each of you is that your T'ai Chi Chih form will deepen along with your understanding of "how to move" so that you will impart this essence to your students. But most importantly, perhaps you can allow the *Chi* to change you. Perhaps the resolution could be fidelity to daily practice.

Before looking forward to 2008, let's backtrack to Justin's Life Celebration on November 17th. For the 60 teachers and students who took part in this day with Justin, no words can describe the energy of Justin's participation and his animation. Can he really be 91?! The celebration highlighted Justin's diverse creative works: painting, poetry, writing, T'ai Chi Chih, and piano composition. Justin oversaw the program and contributed his photo collection, which has been compiled into a DVD biography of his life by the T'ai Chi Chih Association. This 17-minute DVD briefly sketches the highlights of Justin's life through photographs and narration. It was personally enriching to see photographs that connected many of the stories Justin has related over the years. Thanks to Ginny Morgan, Doug Harned, and Ann Rutherford, we now have historical pictures and text available for future generations of T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students. Along with the DVD, there is also a 10-minute CD of two poems that Justin calls, "my best creative work." The poems, read by professional actors, are entitled, *O Ye Restless Man* and *On the Mountains of the Moon*. When they were played at the celebration, the audience was deeply affected. Pam, Sandy, and I will be showing the DVD during various programs we present. We feel it is important for people to experience the thread that was woven through a life to give the world T'ai Chi Chih (and so many other artistic and creative works.) These archival works will help to keep Justin's life and memory alive for future generations.

In the Calendar you will see opportunities for intensives and teacher trainings along with retreats, workshops, and renewals. Teachers are encouraged to attend these with their students. But perhaps the months or locations don't fit your busy life. If that is the case, please contact Sandy, Pam or me about sponsoring something in your area. In reflecting on past and upcoming events, the gift that enriches me

most is being with so many dedicated practitioners. I am inspired by all those drawn to the T'ai Chi Chih form. I would never have imagined the impact this has in my life. For those who have not attended a program lately, you are especially welcome to be a part of the ongoing experience of evolution that emerges in silence, movement, refinement, and awareness.

My gratitude to Justin for his fine article in the November 2007 *Vital Force*. We are hoping to grow an international scholarship fund for individuals who may need assistance in attending a teacher training. Justin has pledged a certain amount to this fund and "we hope other teachers will do likewise." As soon as this has been set up, you will receive more information regarding the fund and whom to contact about requests and contributions. In the past, individuals, conferences, and area teachers made such funds available, and we are deeply grateful for this outpouring of interest.

Please consider attending the Annual Conference in the San Francisco Bay Area (July 17 – 20.) These four days invite us "In the Essence" to gather as a TCC community, be inspired and supported, and be renewed and energized. We look forward to welcoming and seeing you! Come and enjoy; come and have fun!



Effortless Effort

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

Watching clouds high up in the sky drift and move and change so effortlessly, melding from one form to another; watching a leaf balanced on the surface of the water of a gently moving stream, floating effortlessly ... these images capture the feeling we strive for in our T'ai Chi Chih practice. It is the feeling of absolute effortless movement, when the arms seem to float through the form. When we try too hard to make the movement right, we usually use more physical effort and muscle than is necessary. When we play it safe – not wanting to lose our balance, or fearing physical pain, or not letting go into feeling the form – we create tension and limit the potential of what the practice of TCC can do. Often we are not aware of using effort or holding back. By experiencing a contrast we are able to feel other possible ways to move.

This exercise helps practitioners to feel that effortless experience, when the hands/arms are moving in synch with the weight shift without effort. Before doing this exercise I explain to students that during some of the movements I will be asking them to do the hand pattern too large or too small. Then we begin with Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps Its Wings as usual. After a few reps of Around The Platter, I ask the class to continue to move doing the arm pattern too large. After a few reps of doing it too large, I ask them to do it too small, to really hold back. After a few reps I ask them to let go and find the effortless path. During the time of “too big” and “too small” I ask them to be aware of their bodies, to notice what it feels like. Then when they let go, without trying too much or holding back, there should be a feeling of effortlessness. The arms should float through the movement. After experiencing the muscular effort of “too large” and the tension of “too small,” the arm/hand pattern can be performed without thinking one’s way through it. It is done from a feeling and sensing way of moving. It is important when moving from “too-large-too-small” into the effortless middle ground that the focus drops to the soles of the feet (from the upper body) and remains there.

When doing this exercise I don’t do it with every movement during the practice. After doing it with two or three movements, on one or both sides, the practice resumes as usual for a few movements. Then one or two are tried again using this technique.

The goal is to feel the contrast of effort, tension, and effortlessness. Some students comment after trying this: “I felt like a monk on a mountain top ... no one was there doing T'ai Chi Chih.” Most often they remark about how soft they felt, how effortless the movement became.

One note of caution when doing this exercise: Since a lot of attention is focused on the hands, it is vitally important to bring the focus to the soles of the feet in the rest position and when not doing the “too-big-too-small” part.

Are You Open To The Flow?

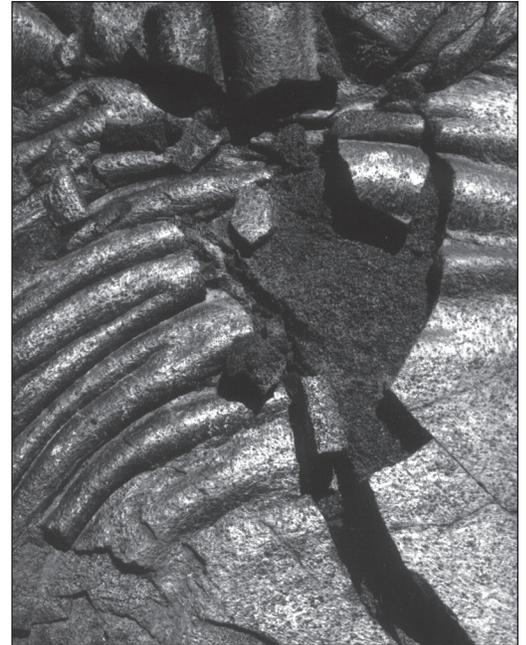
By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

As we enter a New Year, thoughts turn to changes we want to make. For me, one of these is to be more open and receptive to the flow of the *Chi*. Certainly T'ai Chi Chih practice cultivates openness and receptivity to the Life Force. *Seijaku*, the advanced form of T'ai Chi Chih, does so in even stronger ways. Have you learned *Seijaku*? Do you practice regularly?

Seijaku is a gift that Justin Stone has given to TCC teachers for our own evolution – and to share with our best students for theirs. It helps us on our path of unfolding, to realize and express our True Nature. It can even “burn the seeds of Karma” and free us from old habit patterns that no longer serve us. *Seijaku* practice cultivates the experience of serenity in the midst of our busy, daily lives as well as improves our TCC practice. It was from *Seijaku* that I learned to keep my back heel down low in the forward weight shift of TCC and where I learned what “moving with softness” really means.

If you want to learn *Seijaku*, I encourage you to get Justin’s *Seijaku* DVD from Good Karma Publishing and study with an accredited *Seijaku* teacher. Any TCC student who knows all the movements and has been practicing regularly for a year or more (or any TCC teacher) can learn *Seijaku*. (Accredited *Seijaku* teachers are listed on www.taichichih.org.)

Now is the time to learn *Seijaku*, or if you have already learned it, to rededicate yourself. Deepen your practice, understanding, and appreciation of *Seijaku* by attending the Renewal on July 21-22 following the annual Teachers Conference. It is open to anyone who has a basic knowledge of *Seijaku* and wants to go deeper. See you there!



Around The Platter Variation – Polarity Within Circularity

By MEG SCINTO, RINGWOOD, NJ

I ask students to rub their palms together briskly and then separate them slightly to feel the unseen and ever present energy field within them. This opens up students to the concept of feeling and holding energy between the palms of their own hands. To begin teaching the movement I demonstrate it a few times on the left and right. I then have students do the arm movements separately while keeping the lower body still, having learned this method from Sr. Antonia.

Left side: bring the hands up to heart level, palms facing the earth, relaxing your hands and fingers. Rotate the wrists and hands upward and as the palms face each other (hands slightly cupped), form a ball as the hands travel toward – but not completely to – the left shoulder. Think of the ball as a small balloon you hold lightly. (This is where the polarity is, between the cupped palms). As you carry the ball the arms naturally come forward with the forward weight shift. Carry the ball until the hands are at center, coinciding with the end of the forward weight shift. Gently release the ball at heart level allowing the palms to face the earth while they complete the circle during the backward weight shift. As the hands come back to center, repeat the above. Do this a few times to the left and right.

It is now time to incorporate yinny and yanging. From the resting pose, sink your knees slightly, transfer your weight to the right leg, stepping out with your left heel while bringing the arms up to heart level. And as you begin to flow forward from the

T'an T'ien (relaxing the left knee), form a ball with the palms of your hands carrying the ball in the direction of your left shoulder. Maintain forward movement in unison with the weight shift. Release the ball at center and at heart level, returning in the backward weight shift with “platter hands.” As the hands come back to center, begin to rotate the wrists and hands to form the ball with the ensuing weight shift. Do nine repetitions on the right and left.

With this movement I notice more synchronizing of the arms and weight shift that wasn't there in Around the Platter (ATP). Forming the ball and carrying the ball until releasing it seems to have an added benefit: arm movements slow down, becoming more in sync with the weight shift. Although this may be unconscious, in a beginners' class, this is a big deal and provides a concrete reference – in all movements the arms follow the weight shift and do not act independently.

*feeling and
holding energy
between the palms*



I ask students if they experience a feeling of increased *Chi* or perhaps an awareness of *Chi* that they hadn't had before. Many experience the physical sensation of energy for the first time in ATPV. I also emphasize that the polarity between the palms is the most important part.

I offer constant reminders to keep the fingertips pointed upward and to maintain the shape of the ball until preparing to release it at center. Don't be in a hurry to let go of it. Keep your soft wrists at all times. There is a slight tendency to lean the upper body forward as your arms are in front of you. Coming back to basics, remember that the upper body is still, and that once you have stepped out with your extended leg and flow forward from their T'an T'ien, your arms should only extend to the space in front of you so that you move with a relaxed, and not a straight, arm. Move the arms as though moving through thick air, or move them as though they are submerged in water. Don't forget to breathe while concentrating. And now, let's smile before the next movement!

On a personal note: Ever since first viewing Carmen Brocklehurst's video, I have been mindful of the analogy she expressed, that “in life, we pick things up, we carry them for a while, and then we let them

go.” During this holiday season I was conscious of that as I did my practice (and this movement in particular). With so many things bearing down on us – which perhaps leads to angst or stress – her words were a perfect reminder. Focus on what is important; find the balance between what we can accomplish; *let go* of what isn't necessary to maintain peace and harmony. It also allowed me the time and willingness to write this for *The Vital Force*. With TCC as my tool and *Chi* as my vital force, how could I say no? Much gratitude, Justin, for your gift of T'ai Chi Chih.

Around The Platter Variation – No Variation “Across The Pond”

By EV HANSON, SIDLESHAM, WEST SUSSEX, UNITED KINGDOM

This is the second movement using the forward/backward weight shift. Let's first review the feet. Sink into the ground with slightly bent knees. Shift the weight to the right foot. Lift the left foot and place the heel straight in front of you. Shift the weight softly to the left foot until the weight is entirely on that foot. This bends the front leg and straightens the back leg. When the knee reaches the toes, move slightly from the T'an T'ien, lifting the back heel slightly off the floor. Then slowly shift the weight back to the back foot, straightening the front leg and bending the back leg, ending with resting your weight on the back leg. Repeat this movement several times – envisioning massaging the soles of your feet in a bubbling thermally heated spring. Bring the left foot back and repeat the movement on the right, reversing the movement.

Now let's look at the arms and hands in conjunction with the forward/backward leg movement. This is a variation of Around the Platter that adds the principle of polarity. Start the movement with hands at chest level, palms facing the floor, fingers slightly apart, soft wrists tracing a circle. Place the left heel in front and form a ball with the hands (feel the polarity) in front of the left shoulder. Shifting the weight onto the front foot, carry the ball forward, stacking the spine like a pile of smooth rocks. Reaching the forward-most point, gently open the hands and release the ball to the ground as the circle is completed clockwise around the platter, while shifting the weight to the back leg. Repeat this movement nine times; come back to the resting pose.

Repeat the movement with the right leg forward, forming the ball near the right shoulder, carrying the ball and gently releasing it in a counter-clockwise direction around the circle. Repeat the movement nine times; come back to the resting pose.

Forming the ball on the side of the front leg and moving the circle towards the back leg allows the weight shift to move the arms naturally. This in turn allows the *Chi* to flow through the open meridian channels in our body.

Around The Platter Variation – Challenges Overcome

By RON RICHARDSON, TUPELO, MS

This movement is challenging because of the position of the hands as the student holds (or tries to hold) a ball of energy. Most students are hesitant to put the hands in a position that says, “I am holding a ball of energy that looks and feels like I am holding it.” One reason for this hesitancy is the student finds it hard to imagine that a ball of energy is really being held. This is indicated when the hands, in an upright position, are open on the front side as the student moves forward. It appears as though the student is pushing the ball of energy. This may mean that the *thought* of actually holding a ball of energy is not taken seriously. A second reason is that when doing so, balance is slightly aggravated. The impulse is to guard against being out of balance. Open hands may be an attempt to deal with the awkwardness that comes with this variation part of the movement. This is normal but it also takes gentle reminders to make the needed refinement.

I demonstrate Variation by putting my hands in the Around the Platter (ATP) position in front of my chest. I move my hands, circling to the left, as my body moves forward. When my hands are in front of my left shoulder I begin to gently cup my hands around a ball of energy. They are now in an upright position. I begin letting go of the ball of energy by gradually opening the hands and bringing them into an ATP position at the front of the circle thus ending the

variation part of the movement. My hands continue moving in an ATP position, circling around back to the front of the chest where I again cup my hands around a ball of energy in front of the left shoulder. After a second time around, I then ask the students to follow me with an emphasis on feeling the ball of energy.



Editor's Note: The most important resource for T'ai Chi Chih teaching tips comes straight from Justin Stone. Period. Watch and listen to him on his instructional DVD. And read about and inspect his movements in the Photo Textbook. Both are available from Good Karma Publishing. His words are also available in the essential booklet, T'ai Chi Chih Teaching Tips, available through the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Association for a small fee (www.taichichihassociation.org and 505-299-2095.)

Rocking Motion Through Around The Platter Variation: A Retreat Experience

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. In this issue, we will catch up to Around the Platter Variation. As Amy says, "The recent retreat was spent in a more physical exploration of the form in order to allow the Chi to flow maximally. The second day was spent feeling each movement. Comments from both days are included here."

ROCKING MOTION

As the hands descend down the front of the body (not wider than the width of the body), try allowing the hands to be at a 45-degree angle to the forearm. If the hands are too cocked, the *Chi* is blocked in the meridian channels; it is too limp and there is no substance. Then, harmonizing with the *Chi*, let go in the wrists completely when the hands are just in front of the body. At this point, feel the fingers pointing down, connecting to the ground. This lasts a brief moment. Find the "something" – the fingers are alive. Throughout the movement, feel the ring of light radiating up from your T'an T'ien. Feel the rocking going on inside the T'an T'ien. Feel the heels, arches, balls of the feet and back again.

BIRD FLAPS ITS WINGS

Always feel the *Chi* between the hands first, before beginning the movement. Let your knees follow your baby toes as they bend. The hands come around the top, circling around the approximate size of an 8 ½ x 11-inch piece of paper. The second circle stops at the top when the palms of the hand are parallel to the floor, allowing hands to come directly back together. Let the hands come together as if having the most ecstatic love affair: *Chi* coming to *Chi* equals JOY! Ask yourself: What do you feel in the connection between the hands? What do you feel in the circle? The T'ai Chi Chih movements are



alive. It is a living discipline!

AROUND THE PLATTER

Did the T'an T'ien initiate moving forward or did something else – like the chest, the hip, the shoulders?

This awareness of the T'an T'ien moving first to start the movement helps tremendously in keeping the focus there throughout. Knowing whether the T'an T'ien initiated the movement can be felt! Pay attention to the ball of the back foot – placing the attention in the ball helps encourage the heel not to come up too high. Let the thumbs be at the same level as the hands. Notice what happens to the attention if the thumbs have dropped. (Has the attention dropped as well?) Note the position of the hands. Let the hands begin with a slight angle upward, lifted up by the *Chi*. Feel the *Chi* more strongly as the hands move intentionally through it. In flowing forward with the right foot extended, the right hand curves around the circle and the left hand points slightly into the right hand. At the "far point" (where the weight is shifted as far forward as it is meant to and the hands are farthest from the body), the hands are equal and never more than an inch apart the entire time. Coming back around the circle, the left hand curves around the outside of the circle and the right hand fingers point ever-so-slightly into it. The hands are at the level of the breastbone. Be aware of them floating higher by accident – the feeling of inner strength and groundedness will not be as strong. The circle you are tracing is the entire universe, a universe that is right here in your body. It's not happening out there! The *Chi* is well-distributed throughout the limbs.

AROUND THE PLATTER – VARIATION

It is most important to remember that this movement is about a circle within a circle! If the larger circle is a universe, then out of that universe comes you. You are a universe unto yourself. Then you dissolve back into the universe and rest. Justin takes a "running start." His hands come up to his breastbone, then the hands move a couple inches backwards before moving in the direction they are meant to. Try this; see what happens to the strength and energy of the movement. Notice carefully: what does it feel like to pick up the ball? What does it feel like to release the ball? What does it feel like when you dissolve back into all of life but then not disappear?! Bending the knees does a special thing inside the body – the energy can flow up through the bottoms of the feet all through the body. TCC is the great leveler: it teaches us that we are all great. *Comment from a participant, "With this movement I feel I don't have to worry. Everything will come back again. It may not be in the form I think, but everything that is mine will come to me."*

this movement is about a circle within a circle ...

if the larger circle is a universe, then out of that universe comes you

Think Bigger Than You Can Even Imagine ... or ... “I Want The Whole School To Learn This”

By ANNE PERKINS, ST. LOUIS, MO

When my brother suggested that I offer T'ai Chi Chih in the after-school program at Central Catholic St. Nicholas School (CCSN), I assumed that I would be teaching six or seven older students for two or three months. What a misconception! And how much fun the reality has been!

CCSN, with about 280 grade school students, is located fairly close to downtown St. Louis. Academically strong, it fervently espouses the goal of a college education for each of its graduates. It has recently adopted the Nativity Model, a rigorous academic plan for middle-school students where classes are divided by gender, the day is extended, and students are enrolled in a five-week summer program at St. Louis University.

But the school and its principal, Sr. Gail Tippett, have another even more important mission – to develop the children's spiritual and emotional life. Although only about eight percent of the student body is Catholic, there are daily prayer services and Friday Masses. When I spoke to Sr. Gail about teaching TCC in the after-school program, she immediately said, “Oh, I have something else in mind entirely. I want the whole school to learn this, and the teachers too. These children need balance. We'll start with the middle school.” She thought I would meet with students and their teachers once or twice a week outside right after lunch (!). Come wintertime, teachers would lead children in the individual classrooms. After we discussed the difficulties, Sr. Gail suggested that I give opening demonstrations to seven middle-school classes in their own classrooms and to teachers of the younger grades at a special meeting. I was relieved, hoping to be able somehow to continue with individual classes.

And that is indeed what happened. Although some of students weren't enthusiastic at first (how many 8th grade boys will feel immediately comfortable with TCC?), most children greeted me warmly when I met them in the corridors or appeared at the classroom door. I started with older children, but soon responded to Ms. Armstrong's request to work with her 3rd



*she kept excitedly showing me her fingers:
“I can feel it here when we say that!”*

graders. That class was quickly joined by Mrs. Ezenwa's 2nd-graders. (This particularly enthusiastic group came last on Tuesdays; I told them they were my dessert.)

By now the other 2nd and 3rd grade classes, and the 4th and 5th graders as well, also wanted to learn TCC. Shortly after Christmas the kindergarten teacher demanded, “When are you going to teach my kids?” I ended up teaching the entire school except for the 1st graders, working with various classes on Tuesdays and Fridays. I met each of the 13 groups for 15 minutes, usually in their classrooms, sometimes outside. We did four repetitions on each side. I soon realized that I needed to transform the classrooms into places suitable for meditative moving. I brought in a CD of Native American flute music, turned off the lights, and lit a soy candle. I very quickly became Granny Annie to the younger children, and Ms. Perkins or Miss T'ai Chi Lady to the older ones.

The children were always eager to learn new moves, and most classes learned about two-thirds of them. (Six Healing Sounds was the big hit.) There were some problems with discipline. But when teachers practiced with us, students were usually more attentive. More eager students began to shush the more disruptive ones. Occasionally Sr. Gail would join a class: her tranquil spirit transformed even the most unruly group. Miss Angie, the beautiful adult daughter of a teacher, interrupted her workday every week to practice with her mother's pupils and another class. When I asked her to tell older students why she was so dedicated to TCC, she answered solemnly, “It helps my mind.”

There were so many experiences of joy! During Cosmic Consciousness Pose I encouraged the children to take all the love in their lives, fill the universe, and then ask the love to be return to their hearts. One 2nd grader reacted strongly to Pulling in the Energy, especially the words “streaming in through my fingertips.” She kept excitedly showing me her fingers: “I can feel it *here* when we say that!” The 6th grade boys wanted to form a circle at the end of a practice, palms

extended, trying to feel the energy. One group of 8th grade girls often ended with an enthusiastic “T'ai Chi Chih” as we bowed at the end. Mrs. Ezenwa loved telling me how much calmer her 2nd graders were in class after doing TCC.

I look forward to many years of teaching in this special school that nurtures mind, heart, and spirit so beautifully.

Antonia Cooper Interviews Justin Stone

COMPILED BY AMY TYKSINKSI,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

At Justin's Life Celebration in November, Justin spoke briefly, saying, "TCC is done primarily below the waist. The hips and waist play a very big part. Don't do TCC without the hips and the waist. Please remember, hips and waist. That's all!" Then Sr. Antonia began her interview.

SR. ANTONIA: Is there anything you'd like to add?

JUSTIN: No, but I'd like to subtract some!

SR. ANTONIA: What is your greatest hope for the future?

JUSTIN: It is not a hope. It is an expectation. I expect medicine to accept T'ai Chi Chih. Experience will show TCC's value in healing. Under you, Sister, TCC will be accepted, perhaps worldwide. I believe that TCC was sent here with the aim of healing many people. But that's not all. TCC is a spiritual discipline. People who do it regularly and faithfully receive a good deal. What better than a nun to lead you into the inner? Healing is not the only thing that TCC can give us ...

As for today, which I'm enjoying, my reaction is – it's a big fuss over nothing.

SR. ANTONIA: What is the most important experience of your life?

JUSTIN: There are two that stick with me. Sitting opposite the yogi in India was the strongest influence I ever felt. The influence that man exerted, the strength, has always stuck with me. The other was witnessing a young boy dancing in the rain on an oxcart, shrieking in ecstasy. I felt it could be Krishna, who was an avatar, an incarnation of the Lord. The ecstasy he expressed is what life should be.

SR. ANTONIA: Could you please tell us about Professor Huang?

JUSTIN: Professor Huang was a very quiet, shy man. We're here because of him. When I left the stock market, I was staying at the Kipling House when Professor Huang said "Let me come down and do T'ai Chi Chu'an with you." He taught me three preliminary movements. One was called "Circles within Circles." I didn't include "Circles within Circles" in TCC because people didn't seem to be able to catch on to it. The second movement was something that later became Around the Platter. I can't remember the third.

When I started to teach T'ai Chi Chu'an at the university, someone said something about the warm-ups, these three movements from Professor Huang that had stuck with me. Then Skip Whitson asked me to write a book on T'ai Chi Chu'an. I said, "Professor Wang already has written the definitive book on T'ai Chi Chu'an." Skip then countered, "Why don't you write a book on those warm-ups we do?" I replied, "I don't know. Give me a week." That week the T'ai Chi Chih movements came to me complete with names. T'ai Chi Chih is not a commercial venture. I tore up teachers' tithing checks when the first teachers offered them to me. I wanted to set a precedent.

I don't like the idea of bringing up the past unless it has a purpose.

A lot of the experiences of my life occurred on Wall Street. A Chinese friend asked me, "What is the ethic of American life? What is the basis of American life?" Without seeming critical, I wondered the same thing ... My life changed very drastically when I got the opportunity to go to Japan.

*If you do TCC,
do it for itself.
Let what
happens
happen.*



Justin Stone's Life Celebration



Gratitude, Once Again

By GINNY MORGAN, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Planning for Justin's Celebration of Life started over a year ago with a simple idea from Sr. Antonia to honor his 91st birthday. This celebration, with attendees from all over the country, flowed with gratitude and joy. Because of Justin, who shared his photographs, poetry, and stories, the TCC Association could produce a narrated DVD/CD that briefly touches on highlights of his life. The CD has a poem read by professional actors of what Justin considers his best works, *O Ye Restless Man* and *On the Mountains of the Moon*. What better way to introduce students to the originator of T'ai Chi Chih. This will give you a glimpse of the essence of a true Renaissance man. Justin attended the daylong celebration that included two full TCC practices (including corrections by Justin) and a piano concert by Justin with original songs. Four of Justin's favorite paintings hung for viewing.

The Albuquerque Teacher Training was held right before the Celebration of Life and graduated 16 new teachers. Justin's traditional potluck birthday dinner, this time held at the Albuquerque Academy dining room to accommodate more guests, capped off the day. When Justin rose to speak at the microphone, he said: "*The best advice I can give you is to be grateful.*"

Justin, we are grateful to you for T'ai Chi Chih, for sharing your life, and for teaching us that being grateful is what matters in life.

The DVD/CD of Justin's life is available through the T'ai Chi Chih Center for \$27 plus \$3 for shipping. All proceeds benefit the center. The DVD is 17 minutes; the CD is 10 minutes. Send checks (no credit cards please), payable to the TCC Association, to the TCC Center, Scottsdale Village, 3107 Eubank NE Suite 19, Albuquerque, NM 87111.



open to the inside

By JULIE BUFFALO, RN, COMER, GA

(inspired after teaching her first classes)

moving serenity, watching smiles form
moving with breath, watching for rest

yinning and yanging
weight shifting flow

all together we move
all together we sow

seeds of forgiveness
seeds of peace as we grow

on into harmony
on into opening
lightness of being, circles in space
resting in the universe
here in this room

Reflections On The November Teacher Training

By LUCINDA KUTSKO, JACKSON, OH

A few days after returning home from the November TTC Teacher Training Course, I was watching the *Today Show*. A dance teacher was being interviewed about ballet classes she conducts for little girls who have serious physical challenges. Despite their challenges, these girls are living their dreams – dressing in beautiful princess costumes and dancing on stage for an audience. I heard one brave little girl exclaim, “If something makes you feel good, keep doing it no matter what!” Her advice rang true for our class of teacher candidates. Each of us was encouraged to improve and refine our movements. Sometimes we felt discouraged, but we practiced over and over again. This little girl’s words are so wise. Despite seeming challenges, we do T’ai Chi Chih no matter what – because we know the *JOY* it brings.

Hey, This Stuff Is Real!

By DIANE SEE, SANTA CRUZ, CA

I was faced with challenges when beginning to teach T’ai Chi Chih at a residential mental health facility in May. Although the situation has improved since then, it reminded me of the many challenges – and joys – I have had teaching TCC. Reading the last issue of *The Vital Force* inspired me to write.

As a 13-year instructor in the Older Adults Department of City College of San Francisco, I taught TCC at three YMCAs, two senior centers, two adult day health centers, and a residential home for seniors. Every week! My students ranged from age 50 to age 90. Some were fully able; others had varying degrees of limitations. Usually I had beginners and more advanced students in the same class, which wasn’t easy. Those who knew the whole form wanted to go deeper, while the beginners needed some instruction.

The most challenging programs included students who were disabled because of strokes, Parkinson’s disease, chronic pain, or Alzheimer’s disease. Workers and assistants scurried around the room, wheeling students past me to the bathroom, giving medications, or answering calls for help. As I moved slowly through Bass Drum and “the daughters,” some people ignored me and talked loudly to their neighbors; others followed as well as they could; and some simply kept their eyes on me. I played soothing music and encouraged

everyone calmly, while trying to ignore the interruptions and keep the focus.

Often, when there were distractions during our TCC sessions I used those opportunities to teach the meaning of *Seijaku*, serenity in the midst of activity. The concept was an eye-opener for students. It helped me, as well, to practice *Seijaku* in those frustrating teaching situations, as well as in life in general.

Watching the progress of my students, despite their limitations, has been extremely gratifying and quite an education. One girl in a drug program where I volunteered, when attempting to feel the *Chi* between her hands, said in amazement, “Hey, this stuff is real,” which filled me with appreciation for the power of this “stuff” to affect and change people. And when a sweet little lady at an adult day health center called me over to say, “You’re the only one who loves us enough to teach us how to relax,” my heart almost broke.

When I retired from CCSF in 2003, I passed my classes to my good friend, Judith Schwartz, who experiences the same challenges and the joys. I’ll be starting a new class in January through Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, my new home, and looking forward to sharing this gift with a whole new population. Practicing T’ai Chi Chih is truly joy through movement.



Sixteen Shiny New Teachers Go Forth From New Mexico

Teacher Training in

Albuquerque, NM; Nov. 11-16, 2007

COMPILED BY AMY TYKSINSKI, HOST

COMMENTS FROM JUSTIN TO OUR ENTIRE GROUP (ATTENDEES, AUDITORS AND TRAINERS, ALIKE):

Learn to flow. Don't learn to move. There is no muscular effort. Muscular tension means tension. Any tension tends to close the meridian channels, which means you don't get the flow of the *Chi*. The flow of *Chi* brings so many benefits. *Chi* is the basis of life. As Nisargadatta said, "If you want to worship something, worship the *Chi*." To do T'ai Chi Chih properly is all important. You're here to learn how to pass it along to others. That is your main purpose. You must be a good example of how to do T'ai Chi Chih yourself. When you are soliciting classes, make it provocative. My first advertisement in the classified section of the newspaper said "Enter the cosmic *Chi*" to draw in students. And it worked!

A teacher must be very confident. People know instinctively there is a life force, though they don't know what it is. Everybody is searching for this (TCC). I'm only interested in one thing: how you move. Three inches that way, two inches this way ... That's not T'ai Chi Chih! By moving, I don't mean the moving shoulders and arms. How are you moving – particularly the legs, heels, toes. Concentrate on how your students are moving with the body.

FROM THE NEWLY ACCREDITED TEACHERS:

"Although feedback is a part of T'ai Chi Chih, I wondered why it was here. At the beginning of the week, corrections felt like criticism. Gradually, though, I realized that the sense of negativity was coming from within me. I realized that feedback encouraged reflection. When I listened from my wholeness, the feedback felt like kisses and I was eager to get more. I started going around to the auditors

looking for more. I am deeply grateful for the labor of love from the T'ai Chi Chih community."

– SARA NELSON, KENNEWICK, WA

"Abundance in the reality of a *Chi* that we share with others ... as it has been abundantly gifted by Justin, Pam, Antonia and all the generous auditors. I have never experienced such a powerful week. My knees hurt, my nose is running, and I've never been so happy.

– PAT MOSELEY, SPOKANE, WA

"The week has been more emotional than I ever anticipated. There are no appropriate words to express the magnitude of the love, support, and teaching provided by everyone present."

– STEPHEN RYTER, BOISE, ID

"*Mahalo* (thank you) to all the teachers who shared their energy and wisdom with our accreditation class. And lots of *Aloha* (love) to Justin, who has made the biggest impact on my life by his gift of T'ai Chi Chih. *A hui hou* (until we meet again).

– SHARON CUSHMAN, KEA'AU, HI

FROM AN AUDITOR:

"The teacher accreditation week is truly a transformational experience. During it, each candidate moved from serious practitioner to committed teacher. We felt *TEH* (the "inner sincerity" that characterizes a teacher's commitment to keep TCC pure) developing in each candidate. ... I understand that no matter how well students prepare for the training, candidates return to old patterns of moving before the *Chi* does a final sprint in transformation to create impeccable teachers. ... Learning is an ongoing process while we keep a beginner's mind. I believe the willingness to look at our own form as auditors and the commitment to improve supported the process of transformation in the candidates. Auditing teachers so willingly offered their expertise. Having the pleasure of the presence of Justin and Antonia was an added gift.

– LORRAINE LEPINE, OVERLAND PARK, KS

*"If we examine it closely,
we find that awareness
is the root of T'ai Chi Chih,
which is essentially
inner-oriented."*

*"Circularity is
fundamental."*

*"And we already know that
'softness and continuity'
are the Essence."*

*"When we practice T'ai Chi Chih
faithfully,
we will find that
Love Energy is the fruit."*

– Justin Stone's *Spiritual Odyssey*

Reasons to Attend 2008 Conference

By Lisa Thorburn & Athene Mantle, Co-Hosts, CA

It's always gratifying to read the comments in *The Vital Force* every year after the conference. Everyone is so upbeat and grateful for the experience. But why, exactly, should one plan to attend conference? We thought we'd give you a few reasons.

DEEPENING YOUR PERSONAL PRACTICE

Imagine spending four days enveloped in the *Chi*, surrounded by teachers focused on developing a heightened awareness of the flow of *Chi* within themselves. Of course, there are also the added benefits of spending time with Sr. Antonia, Pam, and Sandy; of hearing how T'ai Chi Chih benefits other teachers; of hearing Justin's annual message. Important too, is fixing all of those pesky little added motions that creep into our daily practice which are not essential and which may prevent us from sinking as deeply into the essence of T'ai Chi Chih.

BUILDING COMMUNITY ACROSS THE US, CANADA, & INTERNATIONALLY

Building a strong national and worldwide network is important to the growth of our community. By attending, you become a part of the web that is growing and serving the world in our loving way.

Besides, once we've met someone at conference it is so easy to phone them to ask a quick question. Imagine that you need information on seated T'ai Chi Chih. The resource section of the web refers you to a teacher whose name you recognize from last year's conference. A quick call and, voila, you have more information than you know what to do with. Attending conference builds connections that help us feel comfortable reaching out to each other.

EXPANDING YOUR SKILLS AS A TEACHER

Continuing to improve our teaching skills is important to us individually and as a community. Conference provides many opportunities for this whether it's how to provide gentle corrections, market our classes more effectively, or build our student base.

There's always something to learn about the "business" side of things at conference – sometimes from a formal session, but more often through a casual conversation when you hear that one thing that makes you a better teacher.

We invite you to join us at Conference 2008 for all of these great reasons and, of course, to have fun when you join us

"In the Essence"!

Initiating The Inevitable

Intensive with Sandy in San Antonio, TX;

Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 2007 BY ALICE HOLDEN, CCVI, HOST

It was a scary thought but sponsoring an intensive was needed for my own practice and area students and instructors. I put fear aside and called Antonia to get things moving. Sandy was available and fourteen participants filled the roster. The responses that follow showed that it was right to go beyond my fears:

"The intensive was filled with ways to soften our practice and integrate principles, and to realize that my practice is living and growing."

"I received courage to continue despite limitations. Being in calmness can lead to unlimited possibilities."

"Finding the effortless point of the movement made it all worthwhile."

"It's been six years since taking my first course. And I've experienced better physical and mental health, and I've made hosts of new friends and set new goals. Who says you can't teach a little old lady new tricks?"

"We worked cooperatively to explore the space between extremes, to find that just-right way to move without effort."

"I practiced flowing through the movements on soft kitten feet."

"The sessions reviewed each movement step by step and explained weight shifts and feet and hand positions."

"With effortless effort
We rock, round and round the platter
Birds flapping our wings.
With softened fingers and shifting weight
We trace the base drum
Carry the ball and pull the taffies.
With energy from a distant star
We puff out joyous breaths, gracefully pass clouds
And illuminate the tops of our heads.
With synchronized movements
And healing sounds, we anoint each other.
Cosmic consciousness is more than just a pose.
T'ai Chi Chih rocks."



Sinking & Deepening

Pacific Northwest Retreat with Sandy, near Portland, OR;

Oct. 12-14, 2007 BY JIM SHORR AND ROBERTA & JOHN TAGGART, Co-HOSTS

The Columbia River Gorge provided a breathtaking backdrop for participants to sink into essence as we deepened our practice. Twenty-two teachers and students were graced with unseasonably warm days and vivid foliage. During breaks practitioners walked the labyrinth and hiked the grounds. And on Saturday evening, the retreat center offered a telescope and local astronomer who offered up a star show.

RETREAT SETTING ENHANCES:

“The essence of my experience was in the natural flow that follows the various weight shifts. The waterfalls at our gorge retreat center served as an enduring reminder of the power and beauty of motion within all of us.” – STEVE M.

“To and fro, back and forth, we wove a pastiche of movement, stillness, shift, and continuity. Soaring with the winds of the gorge, I came away enlivened and enriched.” – BARBARA L.

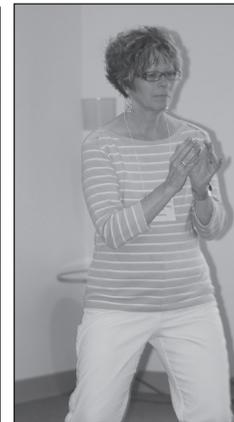
Co-HOST OFFERS OPINION:

“We gained new insights into how to move and watched the transition and approach to our practice. It began with sculpting our movements; reducing and expanding provided deeper understanding. We broke down our movements to better understand, and it culminated with *ah-ha* moments of discovery in our last practice. Sandy modeled minimalism as the road to refinement.” – JIM S.

THE COMING TOGETHER OF COMMUNITY:

“We worked so intently on the principles of TCC, then we dissolved into them with new circle with circles ... circling into center, into essence. A delicious listening. Joy.” – BARBARA

“A full shift makes me glide and feel rooted ... arms become light and flowing ... connecting to that silent space.” – LINDA R.



Ode To TCC

From Closing Retreat Comments
In Columbus, MS; Oct. 5-7, 2007

WOVEN TOGETHER BY PAULA SHANKS, OXFORD, MS

a lot of people ignore the good
the community of t'ai chi chih is strong
watch where you step out
practice lessons are life lessons

why am I even trying?
it's just not working
trying to make things work

where you start, it's all a beginning
we all have our own stories of life

we use a vehicle
this practice is a vehicle
a gateway for some difficult things
partake in whatever way benefits

people who are open
coming from the heart
the support to take us through the door

allow the challenges to strengthen us
pulling away, drawing back our armor
t'ai chi chih is that support

we never thought we could do it
we keep growing, growing, growing
empty with a heart full of light
shows us where t'ai chi chih can take us...

*In the
stillness
we begin.*

*In the
stillness
we move.*

*In the
stillness
we come to rest.*

– DONNA S.

“As a student, it was valuable to watch and learn from enthusiastic, dedicated teachers.” – JIM E.

“This retreat has allowed me to continue on the lifelong journey of learning. I love traveling the road of TCC.” – JOANNE B.

NO EMBELLISHMENT REQUIRED:

“Moving meditation satisfies a spiritual hunger awakened by the perception of beauty in that we remain desirous but able to express that desire and establish relationship with beauty ... though T'ai Chi Chih.”

– MAJ-BRITT E.

“To be and let be in forgiveness and love.” -- ANON.

Flowing & Brushing Softly In The Desert

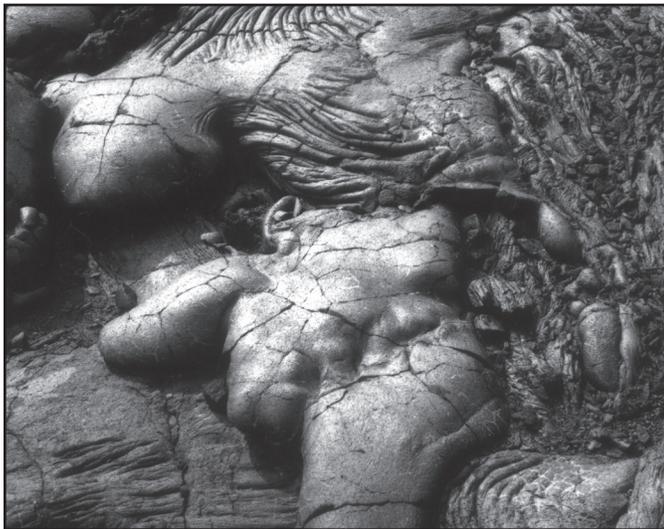
By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

There's no doubt that Justin's artistic sensibilities influenced the creation of T'ai Chi Chih. So this year, you will not want to miss the April 3-6 T'ai Chi Chih Retreat with Antonia in Albuquerque. Why? Because Antonia will bring paper, brushes, and ink to enhance our awareness of the similarity between Chinese/Japanese brush painting and T'ai Chi Chih movement. As Antonia says, "The movement of the brush starts in your heart, goes through your arm, through your fingers, all the way to the tip of the brush. It is important to be connected to your inner depth, influencing the energy and harmony of the whole. Let go of thinking and trust the process." The retreat will be held at the Dominican Retreat House, near the banks of the flowing Rio Grande River. Each participant receives a private room and a brush. The price is \$260 per person and covers all meals – from Friday morning through Sunday lunch. Come flow (and brush) with us!

Teaching Young Athletes

By SR. CARLETTA LACOUR, OP, HOUSTON, TX

After demonstrating some T'ai Chi Chih movements to the St. Pius X High School staff, the boy's basketball coach asked me to practice with the team. I offered seven, 30-minute sessions to the three captains and was coached by *their* coach to offer only a few moves that would enhance their game and help build up muscles around the ankles. The young men were fast learners and excelled with balance and alignment. It was a privilege to practice with these fine young athletes.



A Room Of One's Own Flows Effortlessly

By DEBBIE COLE, SEVERN, MD

I just taught my first class in my new walk-in basement studio last night. After a year of *not* teaching, it was like a drink of cool water to a very thirsty woman. I ordered thick foam flooring (sports mat) and covered the ceiling and walls to section-off part of the basement. The flexibility can't be matched, and I don't have to pay a percentage of my fees to anyone else. My classes are modestly sized for now, since only a portion of the basement is ready. But once the rest of the area is finished, I will be able to easily accommodate a class of 12 and more, and we'll even have a bathroom downstairs. However, with those first six students my heart was already full. I ordered the special flooring on faith and told the Universe that I needed six students to pay for it. I'll complete more as I can afford it; hopefully by Spring we'll have three windows facing the woods and top-to-bottom windows in the double doors.

It certainly makes it easier to promote GKP books and other TCC items because I don't have to cart everything to another studio. It's set up ahead of time and doubles as a permanent storage area. Back issues of *The Vital Force* and Justin's books and DVDs now have a permanent place that allows my students constant access to them. I handed out catalogs and postcards during the first class and let students know they can order directly from me. I look forward to more effectively using Good Karma resources, thereby enriching my students' practice and overall T'ai Chi Chih experience.

TCC On Television In Canada

By SHEILA LEONARD, PBVM, ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

I was invited to demonstrate and promote T'ai Chi Chih on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC's) *Living Newfoundland* with some of my students. CBC filmed about 20 minutes at one of our practice classes in October, and they edited it down to three-and-a-half minutes. There are lots of great movement shots and CBC did a good job adding subtitles about the benefits. The camera focused a great deal on the students, and I always say that my students are T'ai Chi Chih's best advertisements! It aired recently and you can watch it on-line at envision.ca/webs/taichichihnl. Perhaps it will give others courage to do something similar if you have the opportunity. You may even get brave and look for opportunities.

An Open Letter

By SR. PATTY CAMPBELL, OSF, BATESVILLE, TN

It was late August and I had just come inside from practicing TCC on the last day of my annual retreat. I gazed out the window into a sheltered grove of trees, sharing the energy, beauty, peace, and quiet of this grove with the trees themselves. As I practiced TCC in the grove, I recalled other places I have been privileged to do the same – on a Utah mountaintop, on Lake Michigan’s shores, at the ocean in California, in the Arizona desert. What rich gifts the earth brings with its dying and rising, greening and browning. To me, that is who we are – each unique yet all one in purpose: giving to others the gifts we have received, especially the gift of TCC.

I was taught TCC in 1992 by Sister Francis Kay, RSM. She encouraged me in so many ways and believed in me as I stumbled through those initial lessons. As a result of her belief, I became certified as a teacher in 1994. Over the course of 13 years, I have found community at YMCA’s and nursing and assisted living homes; with Alzheimer patients, wheelchair patients, young and old, men and women from all walks of life. Several are now certified TCC teachers.

It is now time to do what TCC has helped me to learn – to let go! I am letting go of teaching publicly. My physical abilities are not the same (I now wear a brace to support my posture), and I believe it would not be fair to students. So I am resigning. And I am sharing this with you because you have supported me through the years, through *The Vital Force* and other ways. I have read your stories and been encouraged by your faithfulness in giving to others what we have been given through Justin Stone. I will never forget my TCC community and will continue daily to send out the stream of love and energy as I continue to practice TCC. May I continue to receive the same. Namaste.

Community Outreach

By LORRAINE LEPINE, PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KS

The process for developing “Guidelines for Teaching TCC to Specialized Populations” is underway with the help of many teachers, chief among them Hannah Hedrick, Donna McElhose, and Pam Towne. Resource teachers are presently working on how to teach seated TCC; to people with Lyme disease, COPD, Parkinson’s, and cancer; and to school-age children. The help of all resource teachers is needed to bring this project to completion. Please contact me if you can help with drafting guidelines.

The purpose of the student questionnaire is to note any physical, mental, or emotional changes a TCC student might experience over the course of a class. The collection of uniform data examining a diverse sample could become a pilot for a larger study and help attract research interest. The survey also allows teachers to speak of changes with more authority, and they may be able to use the results for marketing. Additionally, a researcher or writer can describe changes in terms of percentages of students that experience certain changes after six to eight weeks of practice. The 12 survey questions relate to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of well-being. The anonymous survey can be taken quickly – before the first class and during the last class.

Anita Vestal, who initiated this research project, is receiving data within a statistical software system. But we are still at the beginning of the process to validate the TCC student questionnaire; we need at least 1000 responses. Any teacher who would like to participate in the pilot study needs to contact me to receive the student questionnaire and instructional protocol. I will also add them to the pilot teacher list for follow up.



Picking Up The Mantle

By STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

At the 2007 Conference, Antonia, Pam, and Sandy encouraged everyone to teach a weekend workshop. We are taking the challenge to heart.

After Antonia gave a workshop in February 2006, there was an immediate boost in students signing up for our local TCC classes. It was primarily because we *really* got the TCC name out in the public and into people’s minds. Now, we have a five-teacher workshop starting soon, and I’ve already had new students show up at my regular Saturday class because they’d seen the workshop flyer.

A ripple effect is occurring from our joint efforts, and we plan to capitalize on the momentum. If history repeats itself, we’ll receive several requests from the community for new classes and new places to teach. If we can do it down here in Mississippi, you can do it anywhere.

It Made A Believer Out Of Me!

BY HOPE HADLEY, BEAVERTON, OR

When I decided to learn T'ai Chi Chih, I knew from my reading that one benefit was a possible improvement in health. While that seemed nice, I wasn't convinced I would see a difference in various physical problems I'd learned to live with over the years. I *never* expected to experience a change as profound as the one I had recently.

Friday morning started too early, at 4 a.m., with a blinding headache. I knew from experience that no painkillers, over-the-counter drugs, or prescriptions, would stop the pain without side effects that would make me feel worse. I got comfortable until my chiropractor's office opened at 7:30 a.m. and I could beg for *any* available appointment. (I'd learned years ago that a spinal adjustment would eventually help the headache go away in 24 hours.)

When I arrived at the office, I was put in a private waiting room. My doctor is busy, so it can take up to 30 minutes before he's able to see a patient. While I waited, exhausted and in barely-tolerable pain, I decided to do just one movement: Rocking Motion. Closing my eyes and breathing deeply, I began. From Rocking Motion I moved very slowly into Bird Flaps its Wings, and then gently into the next movement, and the next, feeling myself relax despite the pain.

As I was finishing one of the movements, I suddenly felt my neck shift and heard a crack, crack, crack as it adjusted itself back into its correct position. My eyes widened in amazement as the intense pain in the right side of my head drained away completely. I stood still and waited, continuing to breathe deeply. But the pain did not return. The relief was such a blessing that I'd felt I'd experienced a miracle.

When the doctor arrived a few minutes later, he asked, "Where does it hurt?" and I smiled when I said, "I came in with a debilitating headache, but it's gone now." (He knows I've been learning TCC and he understood.) Usually when the chiropractor tries to adjust my back, the muscles are so tense that it's difficult. This time, however, my muscles were relaxed and warm; and as a result, I had the best and easiest chiropractic adjustment ever. I left the office feeling energized and pain free.

This one experience – after weeks of practicing TCC – convinced me it will provide long-term benefits, as long as I practice, practice, practice.

They Should Bottle This!

BY MYRA GOLDBERG, NJ

When I began the practice of T'ai Chi Chih in September 2003 at the Caldwell Community Center with my teacher, Linda Sercarz, I had fibromyalgia with chronic pain and fatigue. When I started doing TCC, I noticed I was virtually pain free. Miracle of miracles! What did I stumble onto? They should bottle this! During the day, the pain returned, but I dealt with it and didn't dwell on it as much as usual. As I progressed with my practice, I also felt less stressful; I seemed to have more clarity of mind; I noticed personality changes; I went from being an introvert to an extrovert.

The TCC movements are not difficult to learn but they *do* require practice. It's best to practice daily to reap the many benefits available from TCC. I've noticed on the days that I am unable to practice, there is a big difference in how I feel. This week, I had a "charlie horse" in my leg but when I did TCC, the pain completely disappeared. Long after the practice was over, the pain had lessened and dissipated. Along with medication, TCC helps keep

on the days that I am unable to practice, there is a big difference in how I feel

my blood pressure at normal levels and helps with my balance.

To quote Justin Stone, the originator, "The circulation and balancing of the *Chi* is the great secret of life. It is an exercise that affects the inner organs, as well as the muscular structure. It is a moving meditation with many benefits. The benefits are cumulative and should be practiced every day."



“Second Hand” TCC

By NADINE BURGE, WINTHROP HARBOR, IL

In February 2007, my 14-year-old cat, Spike, was diagnosed with cancer and given a few months to live. The vet assured us he was not in pain. To keep him comfortable over the next two months, they periodically drained off the excess fluid surrounding his tumor.

It was about that time that I began my first TCC class. Initially, I couldn't understand what value the movements could have. But by May, I decided to give it the benefit of the doubt. I began practicing in earnest – just a few movements for ten minutes a day – and I began to see remarkable advantages. In June, I purchased the DVD and started practicing in front of the TV in my bedroom daily.

By this time, Spike had isolated himself from the household. He took up residence in our front hallway, as far away as he could carry himself from me, my husband, and the other cats. He knew he was dying; instinct made him hide. However, he was eating and had already lived longer than expected; I was happy to have him with us.

In October, when my husband began sleeping later than usual, I began practicing in the front room, closer to the front hall. A week later, we noticed Spike was no longer hiding in the front hall. He began coming up the few steps to the living room and spending part of his day there. He'd greet me when I arrived home and played with a catnip toy. He even came into the kitchen with the other cats for dinner.

Right away, I knew: There could only be one explanation for this reversal. He was reaping the benefits from “my” TCC practice. I doubled my efforts, practicing every day directly in front of him, wherever he was. I mentally sent him the healing energy of TCC.

It paid off. By the end of the month, he was back in our bedroom with the other cats, spending at least part of the day there. I mentioned this to my instructor, Donna McElhose (with whom I was now taking my second class), and she said to be sure to do Six Healing Sounds. I hadn't done this previously because we had just learned this movement. But the next day, I tried this with – and on – Spike. Unbelievably, the following day he was back on our bed, sleeping with us and the other cats, as if he had never been ill.

It's now mid-November, and my husband joins me every morning in my TCC practice with Spike. After all, twice the energy means twice the healing for Spike. As for Spike, he's doing very well, even walking better than he had before. My vet's office calls Spike the miracle cat. While I don't believe in miracles, I do believe in the powers of TCC. *Editor's note: In late December, Spike died of liver failure and other complications. However, Nadine is convinced that they would not have had the extended quality time with him were it not for TCC. Nadine continues daily TCC, more convinced than ever of its benefits.*

pinest
whisper
as wind blows
into their boughs.
white with snow
pale moon
glows.

– LOIS NOVICKI (STUDENT OF RICHARD DETERT)

strands,
each one
connected
by energy
flowing through
our lives.
Chi.

– JANE NICHOLL (STUDENT OF RICHARD DETERT)

move
with mind
in the flow.
universal
energy
for all.
here.

– JANE NICHOLL (STUDENT OF RICHARD DETERT)

fix
your eyes
on stillness.
falling snowflakes -
soft whisper
to greet
you.

– JANE NICHOLL (STUDENT OF RICHARD DETERT)

still
silence
in the dark.
amidst the night,
only wind
within
trees.

– CHRISSIE MARKUS (STUDENT OF SHARON SIRKIS)

Peace
free
tension,
drifting away.
empty mind.
full heart.
joy.

– LAURA SCHREIBER (STUDENT OF HOPE SPANGLER)

light
begins
creating
spiritual
energy
within
us.

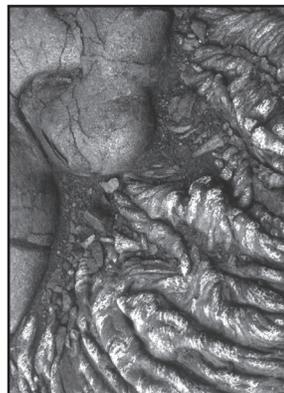
– BETTY GREER (STUDENT OF CARMEN BROCKLEHURST)

walk
alone.
trees and stones,
natural world,
brings you back
to the
peace.

– CAROLINE GUILLOTT (STUDENT OF CARMEN BROCKLEHURST)

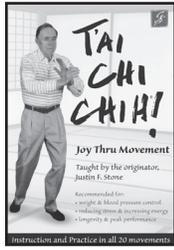
mind
is blank.
do not know
how to start this.
so I sit
with no
thought.

– DEBRA WINLAND (STUDENT OF CARMEN BROCKLEHURST)



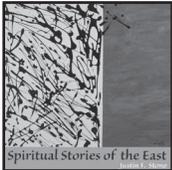
2008 Promises To Be Great

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM



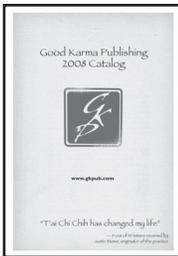
NEW DVD

We have converted Justin's earlier teachings, filmed in 1994, to a DVD, and it is now available for \$32.95. If you want another perspective on the practice, this invaluable resource is now readily accessible. If you own the 2000 DVD and are a dedicated TCC practitioner, you owe it to yourself to learn from the 1994 DVD, too.



NEW CD

We have also converted the out-of-print Spiritual Stories of the East to CD, and the double-set CD is now available for \$19.95. Pop it in your car and cruise to another world and realm.



NEW CATALOG & UPS

Yes, the new catalog features three new products (with one surprise published in June 2008), but the real change is a switch to shipping with UPS. In addition to package tracking, GKP also has daily pick-up. *Note:* if you currently use a PO box for shipping, you will need to supply GKP with a street address.

The Lighter Side

1. I teach at Kernan Hospital throughout the year, except in July when I attend the sun dance, the Lakota Sioux's most religious ceremony. When I resumed teaching in August and was asked about the dance, I mentioned how amazing it was that many Native American studies, TCC teachings, and energy healing overlap. I ended by saying that I believe all paths lead to the same place. One student, Elijah, started laughing and said, "Yeah, the grave."

2. One of the questions on the evaluation sheet for my UMBC college class is: Have you been helped by learning TCC? One student answered, "Yes; I've learned patience is key to life." When I read that comment to my husband, he said, "Imagine that, learning patience from *you*."

3. One morning after teaching TCC at the retirement community, I asked if anyone wanted to say anything about how they felt. After a long pause, a very relaxed Ethel said, "Can you come back at 9 p.m. tonight?"

4. As I was teaching the first of six healing sounds (Ho), one of my students started laughing. She said, "I teach 16-year-olds where that word has a completely different meaning!"

— SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

One of my new students was talking about how supportive it is to do TCC in a group – rather like a 12-step program. That's where she caught herself and said, "Or, maybe, a 19-step program."

— DEBBIE COLE, SEVERN, MD

While in Kansas City visiting my family and doing TCC, my five-year-old granddaughter came running by and asked what I was doing. I invited her to do TCC. She started mimicking the moves and all of a sudden said, "Grandma, I have buzzy bees between my hands!"

— GINNY MORGAN, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

In a TCC class for seniors, a student overheard me talking about teaching a group of 30- and 40-year olds. She spoke right up, saying, "I'd really like that. I'm sure we'd move a lot faster than we do here." A longtime student, looking incredulous, quickly responded, "Do you think Linda would go faster for younger students? That won't happen. She moves at the same pace for all her classes. That's the whole point. This is meditation. We always move slower!"

— LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WITH WHOM	WHERE	CONTACT
Feb. 12-15	Student Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Pam Towne pamtowne@sbcglobal.net
Feb. 19-22	Teacher Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Pam Towne 877-982-4244
Mar. 1	Teacher Renewal w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com
Mar. 2-7	Teacher Training w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak 732-919-0872
Mar. 27-30	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	St. John's, NF Canada	Sheila Leonard sheilaleonard@nf.sympatico.ca 709-579-7863
Mar. 30-31	TCC Workshop w/ Sr. Antonia	Omaha, NE	Rita Otis rmotis@cox.net
Apr. 1-2	TCC Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Eureka, MO (St. Louis area) Marianist Center	Susan Kissinger joythrumovement @sbcglobal.net
Apr. 3-6	TCC Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Albuquerque, NM Madonna Center	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Apr. 6	Teacher Renewal w/ Pam	St. Paul, MN Benedictine Center	Carol Mockovak caroledith@usfamily.net
Apr. 7-12	Teacher Training w/ Pam	St. Paul, MN Benedictine Center	Carol Mockovak 612-729-9040
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
July 21-22	Seijaku Renewal w/ Pam	San Mateo, CA	Athene Mantle seijaku@taichichih-norcal.org
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

MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

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

Mar. 13-16 2008	TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM Spiritual Renewal Center	Judy Hendricks JudyHendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810
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T'ai Chi Chih community*

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



- ☉ Help gather and focus the energy of the T'ai Chi Chih community
- ☉ Gain inspiration and support from being with other T'ai Chi Chih teachers
- ☉ Discover for yourself new levels of softness in The Essence

Look for the CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM in this Vital Force

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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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