

# The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

February 2009

## Justin's Words

### The Essence of T'ai Chi Chih BY JUSTIN STONE

To sink into the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih is much like experiencing Enlightenment (*Satori*) in Zen Training. Conduct and a naturally well-balanced outlook bring a wonderful and unforced outlook to

*we know  
what  
the wise  
ones of old  
took for  
granted*

the one who has felt the joy of flowing *Chi*. Any desire to argue or dispute has naturally flown away and, when one practices with a group, there is a well-balanced feeling. Without getting religious about it, we know what the wise ones of old took for granted. The feeling that TCC is flowing naturally and, that the Practice itself is doing itself, becomes quite natural. We become

grateful for what we receive.

People who watch a TCC performance usually feel the power of it, but they do not know what they feel. Watching it often results in the longing to study TCC and pass along the joy of flowing *Chi*. The desire to become a teacher is often a natural result.

The softness and flowing come quite naturally to those who begin study TCC. We experience the "flow and effort of no-effort" – which is characteristic of the practice itself.

Some teachers have their students read and digest certain books, such as *Climb the Joyous Mountain*,

where they can study that which comes naturally. Each teacher has his or her method, and TCC eventually communicates itself. Am I making too much of what could be called the spirituality of TCC? Such is not my intent. I'll simply repeat what I have said about TCC doing TCC and having the satisfaction of learning to live with the flowing *Chi*. Just let it happen.



## ~ TOOT TOOT ~

We haven't blown our own horn since our tenure began with the May 2007 issue, but when someone commented at Justin's 92nd birthday party in November that, "Would it really matter if there was no more *Vital Force*," we felt like it might be time.

Although we get lots of complimentary emails that we don't publish, here's one from Jocelyn Sampson, a devoted student working to become a teacher: "As I practice entirely alone up here on my lakeshore in Northern Ontario, I am hungry for *The Vital Force*. What a boon it is to be connected through this and the website. After reading Justin Stone's words on the last front cover of *The Vital Force*, I became newly mindful of the weight transfer through the whole of my TCC practice. Hopefully this is the impetus for further progress. I am working diligently on enlarging my understanding of Bass Drum, just as I continue to work on softness during Rocking Motion (after having re-read the teaching tips in the May 2007 newsletter) that I downloaded on-line. I am so very grateful. Thank you for providing me with a point of connection to the TCC organization." [Editor's Note: or non-organization, as the case may be.]

And from YouTube, where two instructional videos were posted by Good Karma Publishing and viewed by almost 19,000 people around the world in the last 12 months: "It's so nice to watch you teach. I

am Chinese but I know nothing about it. I didn't believe those things about 'Chi' before but recently I saw a few videos on YouTube. I strongly believe that the famous Chinese T'ai Chi masters would not lie to make [falsities] due to the Chinese culture background. Really appreciate your work here which can pass one of the greatest human civilizations. Hope I could learn it." – supersig1

## ~ RENEWING SUBSCRIPTIONS ON-LINE ~

You've asked and we're answering. Quite soon (check [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org) periodically), you'll be able to renew your subscription on-line with a credit card via a secured server. This should be particularly helpful to those who are piles-of-paper-everywhere-challenged and to all Canadian teachers.

You'll also note that the web site indicates when it was last updated.

## ~ PRINTED ANNUAL DIRECTORY ~

The annual teacher directory is available for FREE on-line at [www.taichichih.org/teachers.php](http://www.taichichih.org/teachers.php). You can access teacher information by last name and by location (by state and country). Most importantly, the on-line version is updated every six weeks. In light of this (and the rising costs of printing the directory), the cost of the printed annual directory will be \$15 for the 2010 version.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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## Submission Guidelines

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com). If possible, please tailor your submission to a particular section; the newsletter will hang together better that way. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration 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	Clarity	Push Pull
July 1	Early August	Awareness	Pulling in the Energy
Oct 1	Early November	TBD	Pulling Taffy
Jan 1	Early Feb	TBD	Pulling Taffy, Variation #1, Anchor

## Web Site Updates

The on-line calendar and database (for [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org)) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines:

January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

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# A Memory Care Facility, TCC & Dementia

By TERRY JENNINGS, HONOLULU, HI

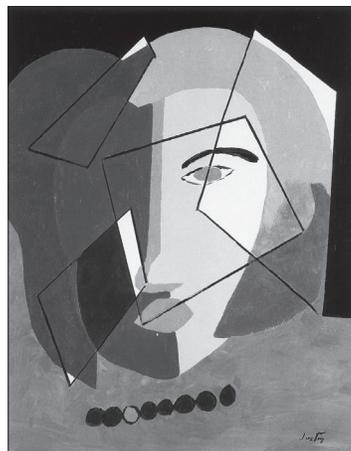
Never give up on your dreams. I'd wanted to teach seated T'ai Chi Chih for many years but didn't know how it would evolve – until April 29th, 2008, when my sister and I moved our mom to a memory care facility in Honolulu. (See the article published in *Newsweek* from September 22, 2008: "My Mother's Case of Pleasant Dementia" [www.saradavidson.com/MyMothers-PleasantDementia.htm](http://www.saradavidson.com/MyMothers-PleasantDementia.htm).)

I taught Mom TCC on many occasions when I visited her in Los Angeles, and she would follow along with joy. But by the time she was age 93, she'd began to get tired and sit down to do TCC or just watch. I'd had so much fun practicing with her that I wondered if the residents of her new memory care facility would like to participate in a class. I offered a pilot program in August that continued for 11 sessions with as many as 21 participants.

I didn't know how to begin teaching them, though. Fortunately I'd just attended the 2008 teacher conference where I took copious notes from Sandy McAlister, who showed me adaptations for the seated form and was so encouraging. I also used the teacher resource list and emailed Blair Laden and Kristina Newcomer, both of whom offered ideas and support based on their experiences. I'd like to share some insights from the class.

At a memory care facility you can teach the same thing over and over again in the same or different ways, and it will always be brand new. I preferred teaching in a circle because it offered a wonderful sense of connection and joy when we all saw each others' faces while practicing. Sandy suggested that it was important for people to rock forward and backward in their chairs during the form. I called it "priming the pump" or getting the *Chi* to begin to circulate. I eventually realized that if I got the students rocking prior to starting each movement, their muscle memory would keep them going. The close, with the hands resting on the thighs while taking a deep breath, created a natural high.

Certainly, residents in a memory care facility can easily learn seated TCC and experience the benefits of inner peace, joy, and an increase in their Vital Force. My next dream is teaching TCC to recovering addicts. I'd like to help replace their negative habits with positive ones. If you have suggestions, send them along. Aloha.



*Editor's note: As Terry's sister, Sarah Davidson, writes in Newsweek: "Did dementia bring [mom] serenity and the ability to live in the moment – a state I've spent many hours in meditation trying to attain? ... What intrigues me is the similarity between pleasant dementia and the state that spiritual teachers encourage people to cultivate: acceptance, letting go, being fully present now. Dr. Peter Whitehouse, professor of neurology at Case Western Reserve, says he's a Buddhist practitioner and finds it 'fascinating to consider what it means to live in the moment, because in many ways that's what dementia brings.'"*

## All Things Relate To Practice

By NANCY WERNER-AZARSKI, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

In August 2008, my husband Jim and I went on a canoe trip to Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario. Our mental and physical capabilities are tested on every trip. We paddle and portage, set up camp, stay a day or two, and then set out for our next destination. When we got home, I read one of the park newsletters in which a ranger said that visitors cannot possibly see a whole park – so don't rush. See what you can and don't hurry. As all things in my life relate to my TCC practice, I had a revelation about how to approach practice: don't hurry. Since I will never plumb the depths of the practice, I'll simply take my time. See what I can see, feel, learn about T'ai Chi Chih. Since the last teacher conference I've been working on softness, and between practicing TCC in the wilderness and reading the ranger's advice, my practice softened some more.

It was an invaluable lesson because ... another was coming right around the bend. Soon after that trip, we learned that Jim needed open-heart surgery for an aortic valve replacement (he's fine). Learning that we're vulnerable sent me on an emotional roller coaster and brought me face-to-face with several illusions that I hold quite near and dear. I tried to practice but couldn't emotionally handle it. I cannot really find the words to describe how it felt. What I could do, though, was sit. To ground, I drew on the energy from fellow teachers. Mentally I could visualize others doing TCC, and it calmed me. My physical symptoms from anxiety dissipated. I did this several times a day until I could do my physical practice again. At first I felt I was "stealing" energy from the group, but I grew to feel the group was sharing with me, soothing me. It still comforts me that when I am doing my practice, I might be helping someone else.

This story ends with me hurting my hip so badly in early November that I could not practice for a month. I returned to a mental practice but sorely missed the physical one. Once I was physically capable of practicing again, I thought, "Ah, this is beginner's mind." Between not doing it for a month and then practicing with restrictions to limit the pain, my form has softened, slowed, and become new again. It's truly been a learning experience. I start my practice in the resting position – but mostly I start in gratitude and love.

## Getting Quiet & Sharing The Feeling

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

When I started to learn T'ai Chi Chih in 1976, my first teacher, Helen Brungardt Pope, asked us to share what we had learned from our practice. She wasn't talking about where to put our hands and feet. She wanted to know what we had experienced from doing the movements. I didn't really know what to say because I had simply become quiet during the practice. Although this by itself was amazing, I didn't know exactly *how amazing it really was*. You see, before learning TCC my mind whirred like a blender. It was continually spinning and going nowhere. During my practice, though, everything was quiet. The more I continued my practice, the more that "quiet" began to be part of my daily life.

From the beginning Helen's question was very important because it made me notice what I was experiencing. This continues to the present day. This question has affected everything, including what my hands and feet are doing. Is there softness in the wrists? (This softness allows the energy to flow onward to my hands and then circulate to the rest of my body.) Can I feel what my feet are doing – from the planting, to the shifting of the weight, to the bubbling of the springs beneath my feet? Each part opens me to the full expression of my being within the body – but not in a floating way; floating takes place outside of the body. Experiencing it within the body takes strength, courage, and freedom; it's what makes it possible to have a healthy body. By doing TCC correctly, a priest in Justin's class was even able to regain his sense of smell.

Doing the hip swivel in the side-to-side movements is monumentally different than doing the movements in a stiff, straight-across, turn-the-waist-with-no-elliptical-motion way. The elliptical motion opens up the *tan t'ien* so that we can experience its roundness and its actual motion; we can experience it as part of our being. This motion is the natural flow of life; it is circular. When I asked myself, "What is happening in the *tan t'ien*?" I would experience a warm nebulous feeling. Now, though, I can feel the turning that naturally occurs all the time. Now it has become dynamic during my practice. It's what teaches us to love and share the *Chi*.

*now it  
has become  
dynamic  
during  
my practice*

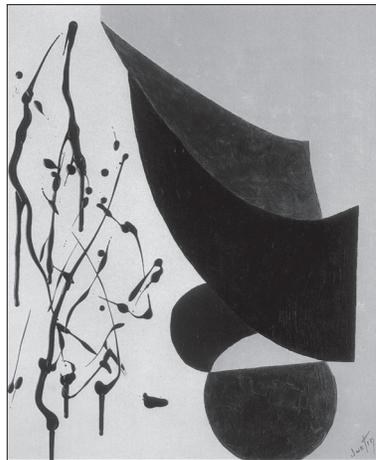
## Chi For Two – Team Teaching

By NANCY LECRAW (LIBERTYVILLE, IL)

AND BOBBIE WEICHMAN (GRAYSLAKE, IL)

The setting each Tuesday morning is Bobbie's living room, always generously supplied with tea and treats, and our purpose is to plan the week's T'ai Chi Chih classes. During Fall 2008 we had two beginning classes each week. Our planning sessions begin with discussions about the movements we taught the previous week and those we will review this week. Did the students have any problems? Did they understand the moves? Do we need to explain or demonstrate something differently? An important part of our meetings is planning how to teach new movements. How do we break the movements down into understandable parts? Could we use props effectively? Once these decisions are made, we decide who will lead the new and review movements. (Dividing responsibilities also allows the chance to refine our own particular movements.) During class both of us demonstrate new movements, then one of us takes the lead teaching it. Our students say they enjoy being exposed to different but complimentary styles and personalities. While we stay true to the principles of TCC, our styles are slightly different because we have different physical abilities.

We've been team teaching for five years. When we were accredited, we thought teaching together would be fun and advantageous. (One big plus is that if one of us is unable to be in class, there's no need to find a substitute.) Flexibility is another advantage. In some classes, Nancy works with seated students while Bobbie does TCC standing with the rest of the class. As one of us teaches a movement or leads a set, the other helps students individually. We also divide our meetings with program directors at various locations. When we first began teaching, we were careful not to step on each other's toes, talk over the other if she was leading, or explain things in contradictory ways. Our planning sessions ensure that we're on the same page. Our team approach has been well received at senior centers and in the local community college enrichment program.



Through team teaching, we share the experience of TCC with each other, our students, and the community. We continue to take a TCC class with our original teacher, Donna McElhose, so that we remain both students and teachers. Teaching together has enhanced our individual practices, our group practices, and our teaching experiences. As we prepare each week, we are indeed sharing *Chi* for two and two for *Chi*.

# Sharing, A Leadership Quality

BY SKY YOUNG-WICK, PARKVILLE, MO

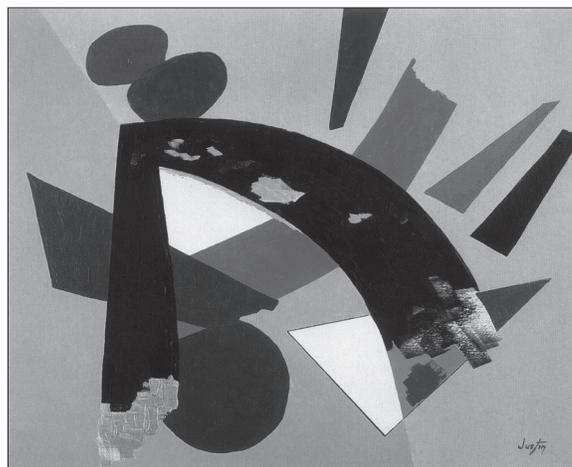
As a T'ai Chi Chih teacher you may have not thought of yourself as a leader, but I think you are. You may argue with this premise and say, "Justin is a leader, Antonia is a leader, Sandy and Pam are leaders, but not I. I'm just a TCC teacher." Of course the others are leaders and have a position of authority within our community. But let me define what I mean by leadership. It's always personal, and the core of leadership is relationships. A leader does not necessarily have positional authority or a title. Think of a mentor in your life. One of my earliest mentors was my babysitter, Marge. I've known Marge for almost 50 years, and when I was 18 years old, I referred to her as my 55 year-old best friend. At 90 years old, she continues to be a cherished mentor and leader to me.

*in my mind  
you are all  
leaders*

One of the things that leaders do best is sharing. They share wisdom and compassion, life's lessons, their time and attention. They may be the one person who really listens to us. Sometimes that includes

honest and difficult feedback when we need it, and at other times, it takes the form of gentle encouragement. Most importantly, I believe leaders share their hearts. Their sharing is done without ego because true leaders have humility; they live their life in gratitude.

I believe this level of leadership is rare. Yet, the spiritual essence of TCC naturally attracts teachers who exude these very qualities. As TCC teachers we are sharing this wonderful gift that our teacher shared with us. We give this gift to ourselves in the form of a daily practice, and then we share it with our students. We share our time, attention, honesty, and encouragement. We are filled with gratitude for this gift to share. Can you embrace yourself as a leader as well as a TCC teacher? In my mind you are all leaders. The world needs this leadership and our willingness to share the gift of TCC. As teachers we are planting seeds, and one seed can start a garden. Sharing is the key.



# Caring Enough To Share

BY MARGARET A. BAKER, VERONA, MS

I used to have a neighbor with the prettiest flowers in her yard. One day I asked her how she cultivated so many, and she said, "You have to share them, give them away." She offered me many varieties and suggested I share them with others when they multiplied – if I wanted them to keep blooming. As I thought about the theme for this *Vital Force*, I realized that this is what happens with T'ai Chi Chih. When we become deeply rooted and grounded in our daily practice and daily living, we find ourselves circulating good will to our communities through teaching TCC. We circulate *Chi* (intrinsic energy); we balance positive and negative. We teach when we feel like it, and we teach when we don't. As Justine Stone says, "There are only two times you practice TCC: when you feel like it and when you don't."

I would like to dedicate this to my teacher and mentor, Ron Richardson, for sharing and introducing TCC to the Tupelo, Mississippi area. I don't know what I'd be doing today if I hadn't met Ron when I did (at the local Wellness Center when I was experiencing intense withdrawal symptoms from benzodiazepine in 2003). I felt differently from the first practice, and I couldn't explain it. Before I knew it I was hooked on TCC. I had found my love, my all-knowing, my inner peace, my new determination, my joy. And the first thing I wanted to do was to share this joy with others by teaching TCC. (I became accredited in 2007.) On this journey, I've met the most caring people in the TCC community – people who give freely and unselfishly of their time and resources, simply for the love of TCC.

It would be selfish to not share TCC. There is just something about it that makes you want to give and share it with others. I could never say no to TCC, any more than I could stop breathing. My goal for 2009 is to share it with others – especially African American communities. With this population's widespread obesity, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer, I'm certain that TCC can help alleviate some symptoms. I am a living witness. In 2003 my glaucoma and high blood pressure was out of control. With daily practice, both are now under control. Thanks, Ron, for caring enough to share.

# Nourishing, Rooting & Blooming

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

**G**reetings of joy-filled hope to each of you in this New Year of 2009.

Many teachers plan to attend the July T'ai Chi Chih conference in Nebraska City that promises to be another energy-filled, deepening experience of the TCC form for all who attend. Although the economy continues to spiral downward and funds can be tight, I do invite and urge you (if at all possible) to register before the rates increase on April 1st. Come be a part of this conference that will deepen our connections as a community through nourishing, rooting, and blooming the TCC form within.



maybe they will; no one knows the future. TCC does help us to stay in the present, and this is part of my joy-filled hope for this new year.

You may be unaware of a third volume of "Blooming" entitled, *Blooming the Spirit, The Spiritual Dimension of T'ai Chi Chih*, which was presented to Justin at his 92nd birthday party celebration in November 2008. The front cover reads, "Practitioners of TCC report many physical rewards, many of which are summarized in the first and second volumes of *Blooming the Flower*. This third volume, *Blooming the Spirit*, explores the spiritual dimension of T'ai Chi Chih, the experience of which is soul-felt. It represents the subtle transition from our doing TCC to TCC doing us." Copies may be ordered for a small fee from the T'ai Chi Chih Association of New Mexico ([www.TaiChiChihAssociation.org](http://www.TaiChiChihAssociation.org); 505-299-2095). The timing of this could not be better. Reflect on your own soul-felt experiences, for these are real, life changing, and life enhancing.

Most people in North America are concerned about their financial futures. In reflecting on what is going on, my sense is that our experience of life (as we have lived it in the past 20 years) will change drastically in the near future. When the impermanent begins to fall away, what is left? For some, it will be nothing. Those on a spiritual journey, who have been developing their inner soul space (or spirit) through spiritual disciplines, will find a source of peace and hope in the midst of loss and hardship. We as TCC teachers and practitioners will continue to have this peace-filled discipline to support us and help others experience what is essential. This moving meditation, which is truly a discipline, will help keep us centered, balanced, and focused. Perhaps our mission as teachers will take on a very different focus. And maybe, just maybe, our lives will not change at all. Or

Under the hidden teacher resources page (which teacher Lorraine Lepine can give you if you have forgotten or lost it), you will find copyrighted material from Good Karma Publishing about how to teach TCC to various populations. The first guidelines posted are for COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). Please feel free to download these without restriction and use them to better your teaching to these populations.

I look forward to meeting many of you during 2009 to provide mutual support, deeper understanding, and Joy Thru Movement.

## Pyramid Poems

Let  
go of  
the unknown;  
It's not needed.  
Walk in the  
current  
light.  
— MARY WHITE

Breathe  
Deeply.  
Feel the Chi.  
Contemplate life  
in the now,  
here and  
now.  
— DEBRA WINLAND

Take  
pleasure  
in what you  
already have:  
to free the  
Chi to  
give.  
— MARY RUIZ

In  
stillness  
and movement,  
timelessness and  
awareness  
in the  
now.  
— DORA DERZON

I'm  
not done.  
Need more time.  
Yes, change will come.  
Slowly turn.  
I'm not  
done.  
— CYNTHIA WINLAND

Heart  
open  
to the joy  
inside... Let go.  
Everything  
is just  
fine.  
— CAROLINE GUILLOTT

Heart  
rhythm  
drum beating.  
I am being  
loving, all  
deep in  
me.  
— PAULINE QUIMSON-TONG

Joy  
flows through  
secret door,  
so tightly closed  
before Chi  
opened  
me.  
— SHERYL ADAIR

## Sharing Is Cosmic

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

**A**s witnessed at the 2008 teacher conference, the essence of T'ai Chi Chih has many interpretations. Sharing is one aspect. We share the work to put on the conference. Teachers audit training courses and share their teaching tips, experiences, and support. They bring fliers, handouts, and business cards to inspire new teachers to develop their own. Teachers run the TCC center in Albuquerque,

produce newsletters, maintain TCC websites, and keep local communities connected. All of this sharing is a result of love – love for TCC and the desire to see it flourish and be shared with others.

*we begin  
to see  
the world  
differently*

In doing a practice that opens us so directly to the Vital Force – the flow of life – we begin to see the world differently. We feel how we are all connected, how we are part of some-

thing greater than ourselves. We may have intellectually known this before but now we feel it. And feeling this connection, realizing we are not separate, we are more acutely aware of inequities and needs in the world and we want to help. We feel strongly about causes, recycling, and such, not just because we recognize a need “out there” – but because we feel a deep connection within. And we want to share to help.

TCC opens us up, sharpens our awareness, and clarifies being part of something greater than our individual selves. One of the wonderful gifts of TCC is the people who are drawn to it. These are people of the heart. You can feel a loving connection without really knowing them. Despite our faults and weaknesses, the love flowing from the heart connects us. We recognize the true essence of another, the inherent goodness within, not because we overlook personalities and behaviors, but because *our* judgments and negativity disappear when we are in the cosmic rhythm.

Have you not experienced a deep feeling of love and gratitude for nothing particular at the end of a TCC practice? Judgments, fears, annoyances, and disappointments vanish, leaving us with serenity and acceptance. We may not remain in this state for long, but we have glimpses. We taste the experience. We know how it feels to be in the flow of the cosmic rhythm.

In the TCC community we freely share our ideas with one another. We write articles for *The Vital Force*; we give our time to ensure that events are successful. That is why TCC has managed to succeed without an organization – because teachers share with open hands and hearts. We share because we love. We love because we see. We see because we experience the cosmic rhythm. We experience the cosmic rhythm because we practice TCC.

## TCC Is Needed Now More Than Ever

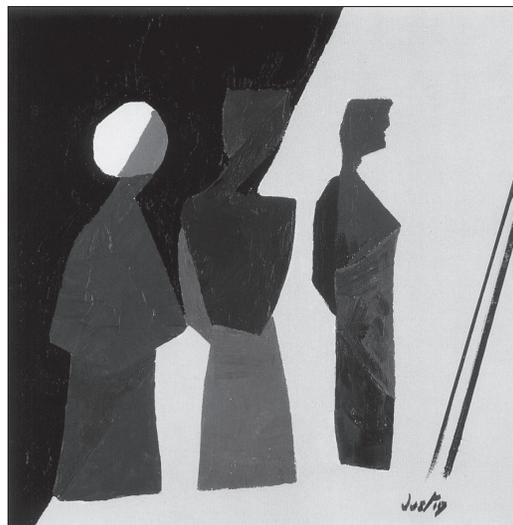
By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

**I**n these troubled times, more than ever, the gifts of T'ai Chi Chih practice are greatly needed. Who do you know that wants to experience better health, more serenity and longevity? This beneficial spiritual and physical practice offers us inner serenity in the midst of a stressful world, joy in the midst of challenges, a longer, healthier, more useful life, and countless other gifts. Do we keep them just for ourselves? Or do we share them with the world?

If you're a sincere student, and have been practicing regularly for at least a year, consider becoming accredited to teach TCC. If you're accredited but haven't been teaching TCC for a while, I invite you to renew your commitment to sharing its benefits with others through teaching. If you've been teaching TCC, I invite you to ask yourself, “How does TCC want to newly express through me?” and encourage your best students to become teachers.

Four teacher trainings are planned in the next 12 months (see the calendar). The fee for this six-day certification course remains at \$450, which is a bargain by today's prices. In addition to accrediting new teachers, these trainings provide a wonderful opportunity for current teachers to renew their own practice, enhance their teaching skills, and give back to TCC by assisting and supporting candidates during their training. Since becoming accredited in 1984, I have audited a training nearly every year in addition to attending the annual teacher conferences, and I've benefited greatly from each of these experiences.

In addition, there are two intensives this year. The fee remains at \$200 (plus room and board) for the four-day course. For those who want to become accredited, an intensive is an important part of preparing to attend a teacher training. For teachers, it's an opportunity to deepen your understanding and practice of TCC as well as to learn how to better prepare your students for accreditation. How will TCC express through you this year?



## Preparing The Lower Body

By ROBERTA TAGGART, EUGENE, OR

**C**arry the Ball to the Side is the first movement with a side-to-side weight shift, and as such, is a pivotal move to teach. My remarks concern integration of three points.

**WEIGHT SHIFT/LEG PATTERNING.** To experience the wave-like action of the weight shift to the side, particular attention must be paid to the weight as it transfers from the *rooted foot* to the extended leg: the extended foot (insubstantial or non-weight bearing) flattens as the *rooted foot* (substantial or weight-bearing) begins the transfer of weight from the sole of the foot through the knee (the floodgate), to the thigh, and into the pelvic region before it begins to settle into the opposite leg.

**WAIST TURNING/HIP SWIVEL.** Using the leg patterning for CTBTTS, feel the weight settling into the opposite leg as the weight shifts as described above. The last of the weight transfer from the *rooting foot* is helping the waist to turn ever so slightly. As the waist turns, the hip swivels as a natural reaction to the fully completed weight shift, allowing for a smooth return or transfer of weight back to the other side for this move.

**SENSING/LISTENING.** Students should be encouraged to feel this move internally. Sense any holding of tension while shifting the weight and release it downward through the legs. This is especially useful when checking for the completed weight shift. Holding tension as the weight is shifted inhibits the turn of the waist and the swivel of the hips. Tension restricts the circular nature of the move within the pelvic cavity.

This exploration allows the student to approach this move with a degree of confidence in what is required of the lower body. Mastery of all these points is not expected all at once, but rather occurs over time. It is enough for the beginning student to understand the importance of how to shift the weight, flow softly, and to comprehend how that affects the turning of the waist and the swiveling of the hips. As students gain confidence in movement basics and observe the turning of the waist and the swivel of the hip, they begin to develop the ability to integrate waist turning, the hip swivel, and the element of listening inwardly to the *tan t'ien* and the flow of the *Chi*.

## Integrating The Upper Body

By JOHN TAGGART, EUGENE, OR

**T**his article focuses on the wrists in Carry the Ball to the Side – with the knowledge that the side-to-side movement of the legs and waist are the driving factors in the movement. Once the side-to-side movements of CTBTTS are taught, practiced, and the students are moving with some confidence, more focus can be brought to forming the ball and carrying it side-to-side.

This is a movement where it's easy to see many of the basic principles of TCC – circularity, continuity, and softness. Simplicity in the movement of the hands as the student forms the ball is a key to integrating the principles. At this point, however, simplicity is rare in the student's flow. Starting with the ball being formed on the right and moving to the left, most students are extending their arms and hands out to the side beyond their core and then driving their arms in a half circle arc down in front of the torso and out the left side extending well past the waist. This is exercise and creates tension not softness. Circularity? Perhaps, but it's accentuated. Continuity? Most hands and arms are extending and stopping before returning in a half circle arc to the starting point. It's quite visual and provides a great opportunity to demonstrate and teach the principals of CTBTTS.



As the movement begins, demonstrate how the hands and wrists softly form the ball and the wrists flow up without tension to the right side of the waist and not beyond the core of the torso. The elbows remain close to the body while the letting the wrists complete the motion. As the weight shifts to the left the ball follows the weight shift and the turning of the waist in a downward arc. The right hand has a 60-40 emphasis moving through heavier air than the left during the right to left weight shift. With continuity the weight shifts back to the right; as it does the right hand emphasis lets go and the ball flows up in an arc following the weight shift to the right until it is back at the starting point of the movement. This should visually demonstrate the softness, continuity, circularity, and simplicity of the movement.

*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](http://www.taichichihassociation.org) and 505-299-2095.)*

## It's All In The Hips

By LISA OTERO, OXNARD, CA

The first side-to-side movement, Carry the Ball to the Side, takes a bit of introduction. Careful instruction really pays off later with the other side-to-side movements – like the four “Taffies” and Passing Clouds.

Step one is to figure out how to turn *the hips* from side-to-side. Sounds simple enough, but it turns out to be a considerable challenge for some. First, I look to see who has natural *mambo* or *hula* (i.e. loose) hips. In other words, who knows the difference between a hip turn and a shoulder turn. Surprisingly, many people cannot naturally differentiate between the two. This is how I help those who can't: First, I have them stand, feet a little wider than hip-width apart, toes slightly turned out. I ask them to soften their knees. Then I demonstrate and ask them to join me in a shoulder turn, swaying the arms and shoulders from side-to-side. While moving, I tell them this is not what we want to do. Then, I have them put their hands on their shoulders and hold their shoulders steady (not letting them turn), while they soften their knees and turn their hips from side-to-side. They see and feel that a completely different set of muscles is employed when turning the hips as opposed to the shoulders. Note that soft knees are crucial to doing the hip turn smoothly and comfortably.

For those still having a hard time, I ask them to assume the same wide-legged, soft-kneed stance and place their hands like six-shooters (pointing out) from their hipbones. I ask them to turn their hips so that their fingers point from one corner of the room to the other. This usually provides the necessary breakthrough.

Once they've mastered the basic hip turn, I demonstrate that the hip turn in CTBTTS is actually a swivel; it's a little rounder and softer than a straight side-to-side turn. It is not a circle, like some would envision doing while using a hula hoop. The form is a slight ellipse. I ask the students to focus on the *tan t'ien* (three inches below the navel) and, as they turn to the side, to pull the belly button in toward the spine and, as they rotate the hips in the other direction, let the muscles behind the belly button relax. This will accomplish a slightly elliptical movement as the hips turn from side-to-side. I emphasize that the ellipse is more of an inner awareness than a visible movement.

The final important point about the hips in this movement is to turn the hips away from the step as you pick up the ball – so that once you set the heel down you can do a full hip swivel. Once the hip swivel is mastered (and I'm still working on it after all these years), all that is left to emphasize is to not drop the ball!

*who knows  
the difference  
between  
a hip turn and  
a shoulder turn*



## The Waist Turns & The Hips Swivel

By ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NJ

“... the waist turns and the hips swivel.” This statement has been the topic of Justin’s verbal teaching and demonstrations in videos sent to the annual teacher conferences over the past few years. In it Justin shows the strokes of a baseball batter, golfer, and tennis player. In viewing these intriguing messages, I often wondered what that meant, and more importantly, was I doing this in my own T'ai Chi Chih practice? I had the opportunity to ask Justin (during a visit a few years ago) about the hip swivel and he said, “Don’t worry about it; you are doing it already.” A bit flustered about not knowing what I was doing, I asked how he would explain this to a new student. He said it was as though the pelvis, besides turning at the waist, was also moving in an elliptical shape – an almost imperceptible oval. I noticed this happening in the continual side-to-side movements of Carry the Ball to the Side; Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion; and Passing Clouds. The waist turns (or opens) slowly as the weight shifts to the first side, creating the imperceptible forward oval. It then returns to the other side with the back part of the imperceptible oval. In writing this, I must warn everyone about looking like you are using a hula hoop or describing a figure 8, or of trying to do something artificially. (See Justin’s book, *Spiritual Odyssey*, on page 15.) What I would like you to do is to be aware of what is happening in the pelvis during this movement. Most likely you are, as I was, already incorporating the swivel naturally in your form if you are flowing from the center (the *tan t'ien*), one of the six principles of movement found Justin’s *Photo Text* and *Spiritual Odyssey*.

## Becoming Aware: Corrections

By CAROL HOUTKOOPER, YANKTON, SD

I know this will sound familiar to some: I'm doing my T'ai Chi Chih practice along with the rest of the conference participants, enjoying flowing together and feeling grounded, when a quiet tap on my shoulder brings me back to reality. A soft voice says "I see you doing this and I think it would be easier for you if you did it this way."

Corrections are the yin/yang of group practice. They are always welcome, but at the same time a bit uncomfortable. No one wants to be told they have been doing something wrong, maybe for years, when they thought they were doing it correctly. However, I distinctly remember every correction I have received and every one has made my practice and my teaching better and more rewarding. I am forever grateful for every teacher who cared enough to notice and share their wisdom.

On the side-to-side movement of Carry the Ball to the Side, I remember a teacher from my early practice years saying *shift the weight, turn the waist*, and that was exactly what I had been doing, the words echoing in my head as I moved. But I was making it two separate moves with an ever-so-slight pause between those movements instead of the flowing hip swivel it was meant to be. In teaching CTBTTS, I continued to use the words to emphasize how to move. (Some students actually interrupted their flow to do it the way I was showing them.)

Once I was aware of my mistake, the movement was much more enjoyable and easier to teach. The first thing I teach now is the principle behind the movement with emphasis on flowing continuously. I have students softly hold their hands in front of the *tan t'ien*, elbows bent and resting at hip level as they carry that ball to the side, softly shifting their weight and turning the waist in one simple, flowing movement, hands still holding that ball in front of the *tan t'ien*, before they rise and complete the circuit. The flowing weight shift allows the hips to swivel and the feet and hands to complete the move without a break.

This also taught me to be careful in how I use words in teaching. I will forever hear those words echoing from years ago as I practice CTBTTS. I know that how we move and what we say as teachers influence our students. Breaking a movement into separate parts can be helpful, but when that student is practicing at home alone, the words may be what are remembered instead of the guiding principle behind it.

*grateful for  
every teacher  
who cared  
enough  
to notice  
and share  
their wisdom*

## Four Aspects Warrant Special Attention

By CATHY FEDEWA, CSFN, PITTSBURGH, PA

Carry the Ball to the Side is one of the T'ai Chi Chih moves that clearly demonstrates the *hands/arms following the weight shift*. Because it's easy to demonstrate this principle to students, they can feel that principle more easily. Allowing the arms to follow the movement of the legs as they step to the side (as the weight shifts from side-to-side) helps one feel that aspect more clearly. It is almost impossible for the arms to move ahead of the weight shift without causing confusion in the movement.



Another part is the *greater emphasis on one hand over the other* during the lower part of the curve of the hand movement.

Though this might not seem like a major part of the movement, it does in fact have a definite influence on the effect of the movement. I find that when I emphasize the leading hand (the hand pushing the ball), there is a much stronger sense of the movement of the *Chi*.

*Complete shifting of the weight* is another principle that very much affects the quality of any movement and affects the speed of the movement. The more I concentrate on doing a complete weight shift, the more the movement slows down – the more effective it becomes.

The final aspect of the movement is the *swiveling of the hips*. What I have found is that many practitioners have been doing this for some time even before emphasis had been placed on it recently. At the 2008 conference, we had the opportunity to work with it more consciously. I had a difficult time with the swivel because it felt artificial; it was very distracting to concentrate on it as I practiced the movement. Frustrated, I let go of the emphasis temporarily and just practiced as I had been. To my amazement, I found that I had been doing it without knowing it. It's true that the swivel is minute but it is there nonetheless. And, although there is no directive saying that the hips move back on the down stroke and forward on the up stroke, that seems the most natural flow.

### Refinements, Anyone?

By HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HI

One of the greatest gifts of T'ai Chi Chih is the constant element of discovery and refinement. For several years, my arthritic hips interfered with maximum *Chi* flow in the side-to-side movements. Now, with two artificial hips at age 70, I am able to emphasize three points in Carry the Ball to the Side, which evoke the "Oh, now I get it! Now I really get it" response. A few thoughts:

1. I try to stay low throughout the entire sequence of extending the light-as-a-feather-foot to the left side, shifting the weight left/right/left/right/left, and while drawing the right leg to join the left leg in rest position. I notice that my students will rise up as they complete the weight shift and draw the empty leg in. Joint or balance issues make this a reasonable accommodation, but in my experience, staying low from beginning to end greatly increases the energy flow. Since I am still low after drawing my leg to the side, I rise back to rest or pause position as I allow my hands to drift down to a graceful conclusion.

2. Based on comments made at recent TCC gatherings, I now hold the pause position at the end of each triple circle sequence until I am aware of the equal distribution of weight between and across both

feet. My sensation is that the yin and yang *Chi* are in balance before I step out again. I wait longer for an even stronger sense of *Chi* flow before reversing the movement to carry the ball to the right.

3. I am working on the narrow oval movement now being used to explain hip rotation, and this is the first time in 22 years that I have had such an immediate positive response to a refinement! I sink and swivel to the right to allow the ball to rise to the right shoulder, cradled by my slightly flexed wrists. I then *press my hips slightly forward* while shifting the weight to the left foot, where I again let my hip draw slightly back until the weight is centered above my left foot. I then sink and swivel to the left, emptying the right foot to extend light as a feather. This time, I *pull my hips slightly back* while shifting my weight to the right. The hips come back to center when my weight is centered above my right foot. My "oval" is very narrow, although perhaps a bit wider than the "pencil width" suggested at the 2008 conference. I find it much easier to create an energy experience in CTBTTS and the other side-to-side movements with this technique.

I'm hoping to see as many of you as possible at the 2009 conference and at the *Seijaku* training, so we can continue this amazing "self-care" and "peer support" evolution that TCC has brought into our lives.

### Group Ball Carrying

By ANNE LOVDAHL, SEAL BEACH, CA

The weather at a recent T'ai Chi Chih practice in Seal Beach, CA, was blustery but you can still make out the Seal Beach pier in the background as several folks Carry the Ball to the Side. Practices are held overlooking the ocean



four times weekly, and we always meet onlookers interested in learning TCC. Our Saturday morning practices average over 20 people; in total, we've had over 50 different people join us for TCC at one point or another. Many practitioners have brought relatives and friends who've then returned home to take classes with locally accredited instructors. One of our regulars is leaving for the Peace Corps in April and will be continuing her practices there.

### Carry The Ball To The Side

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.*

Spiral down, bend the knees, turn the waist and hips at the same time. On the release of the ball, finish the circle with the hands in front of chest (at the top, not the side), then separate the hands and come into a resting pose. The trailing hand pushes and the fingers of the trailing hand are slightly back at about a 45-degree angle (from perpendicular to the ground). What do you feel when the ball passes through the *tan t'ien*? What do you feel when softness happens, with unbridled joy? Hands move with purpose.

# Justin Stone Speaks On T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement

COMPILED BY PAULINE QUIMSON-TONG, CHAMA, NM

When the negative and positive aspects (the *yin* and the *yang*) are balanced, impediments seem to drop away. The mind-body continuum works to adjust to its maximum potential, and the aqueous excess tends to dry up and there is easy weight control. We must remember that the body is about 70% fluid, and too much fluid is decidedly *yin* or negative... It is no surprise in such circumstances [being balanced] that we experience good health and peace of mind, and that we find creativity effortlessly flowing.

.....

It is not the emotions that make us unhappy – but the resentment and clinging that they tend to breed.

.....

A great sage from India, Sri Aurobindo (who lived in this century), made the amazing assertion that if this world were to be abolished, the *Chi* would be capable of building a new world in its place.

.....

The one who responds to things emotionally is easily swayed and frequently has his feelings hurt. Conversely, the over intellectual person finds it hard to love and be loved. Everything must be analyzed. These two, the intellect and the emotions, must be brought into balance.

.....

In the 13th century, the great T'ai Chi Chuan Master Chang San Feng described the way to move by saying, "In any action, the body should be light and alert, coordinated like strung pearls. The *Chi*, vital energy, should be actively excited. But the *shen* (spirit) must remain calm internally." From this we learn that all T'ai Chi is essentially spiritual in nature. Meaning, it is in accord with reality.

.....

Nobody can do it for you. You must travel the path yourself.

.....

A Chinese Monk once said, "When the mind is transparent and pure, as if reflected on the mirror-like surface of the water, there is nothing in the world you would dislike. When it is serene as the light breeze in the sunshine, there will be no one whom you would like to forget." Such serenity is rare in these hectic days. Nevertheless, it is possible.

.....

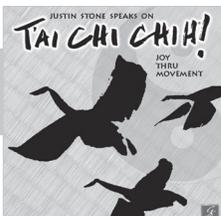
To one who understands the underlying unity of life, it is not surprising that our outer activity is changed as easily as our inner being.

.....

The Japanese speak of *Seijaku*, serenity in the midst of activity. [It is] not escaping from the world to some mountaintop as is taught in the Indian teachings. But [it is] finding the real meaning, fulfillment, energy, and wisdom in the midst of everyday hustle and bustle. [It is] building a silent and imperturbable center while active in the disappointments and triumphs of our busy lives. This is real fulfillment.

.....

We are the products of *Chi*. Habit plays a great part in how we condition the *Chi* and every thought and every emotion. Habit has effects on it. This is what is meant by the reciprocal character of mind and *Chi*.



From *Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih*, ©2006  
Available on CD (\$11.95; 60 minutes) from Good Karma Publishing ([www.gkpub.com](http://www.gkpub.com))

# Do TCC Properly For Maximum Benefits

BY JUSTIN STONE

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, SEPTEMBER 2001

**H**ow you do the movements of T'ai Chi Chih is all-important. Not for academic reasons or to please the teacher – but because the amount of benefit you get from practice depends on the way you move. If you are using muscles to move your arms, while at the same time shuffling your legs, you will not get [the] full benefit. All-important is

*flowing effortlessly from the center, while effortlessly pushing the arms through very heavy air, is the desired method and the one that brings results*

having you move from the center, the *tan t'ien*, with no effort from the shoulders or the arms. It is easy for the teacher to tell if the student is moving to the maximum of his or her capacity. If the feeling is floating and flowing, the movements are being done correctly. Flowing effortlessly from the center, while effortlessly pushing the

arms through very heavy air, is the desired method and the one that brings results.

Watching a student is not like putting him through an exam, to be graded by what he or she has written on paper. The great results felt from proper practice cannot be put into words. Sages of India equate the *Chi* with Consciousness itself, and, when the *Chi* (*prana*) leaves the body, you are dead. Therefore, causing the *Chi* to flow, while balancing the yin *Chi* and the yang *Chi*, will, in the minds of the Chinese wise men, bring longer life and better health. TCC students also write that it changes their lives. We have seen how favorably it affects hardened criminals in prison, and we have had reports of great benefits (for the student doing the movements well) for those suffering from osteoporosis and migraine headaches. It is hard to get the idea of effort out of student's minds, and it is only natural, in the beginning, for the student to feel that the harder he or she tries, the better will be the results. But that's all wrong. Softly and effortlessly is the correct way. And, of course, the student must do correct yinping and yangping, as well as accenting one side or the other when called for.

On my latest [dvd], the practice session is being led by Suni McHenry, followed by the other three teachers, in a stifling studio with no air coming into the room; yet it appears effortless and joyous. Following the teachers on this practice session, strive for the feeling of serenity that comes from doing the form properly. Don't do it well to please me but to please yourself.



This above painting by Justin F. Stone, entitled *The Swiftiness of Light*, was created in 1999 and is used on the cover of Justin's monograph, *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone*. His "ongoing experimentation in fluidity and form -- applying liquid acrylic in a linear manner -- resulted in many variations, each individual." All the painting reproductions in this issue of *The Vital Force* appear in *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone*, copyrighted and published by Bindu Press & Studio and used with permission. The impressive four-color monograph may be purchased through Good Karma Publishing (gkpub.com) for \$32.00.



Justin's 92nd birthday celebration at the T'ai Chi Chih Center in Albuquerque in November.

# Nebraska City Or Bust: July 2009

BY SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

If you were to fold a US map in half – coast to coast and north to south – you’d find Nebraska City, about 45 minutes south of Omaha, in the center-fold. Chosen because teachers asked for it, Lied Lodge is a retreat setting with all the comforts of a hotel, with all the meeting rooms in one building, and within a one-and-a-half day drive of many places. Road trip anyone? Get two or three other teachers together and share the hotel room, gas, and fun. Think of what wonderful conversations you’ll have on the way. I’ve stayed at Lied Lodge Conference Center; it’s the perfect environment for nourishing us and deepening our practice.

One highlight of the 2008 conference was the raffle, where we raised \$1,500 for this year’s conference scholarships: Donated items were placed on a table, and as tickets were drawn, the winners had their pick of the table until everything was gone. Even the maple trees used as decorations were raffled. We sat with fingers crossed, hoping our number would be called so that we could chose the gorgeous quilted wall hanging (made by Nancy Werner-Azarski) and the lovely scrolls

highlighting Justin’s words (made by Wendy Helms).

*going to conference  
grows our  
understanding,  
awakens us  
to new insights*

woodwork – big or small, simple or elaborate. If you have a treasure that you’d like to pass on, please consider donating it. Contact the 2009 raffle coordinator, Dorene Krause, at 201-444-9712 or dorenekr@hotmail.com.

If the paper copy of the registration form has disappeared from your paper pile, download one from [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org). Set your intention: You want to come. You can make it happen. Be creative. Set aside a self-enrichment TCC fund with every paycheck. You only have to pay the conference fee when you register, and the sooner you register, the more you’ll save. You’ll pay the room fee when you checkout of the lodge. (In other words, you don’t have to come up with the whole amount at once.)

The theme for this *Vital Force* is sharing. But it’s hard to share if we’re empty. Going to conference replenishes our enthusiasm, grows our understanding, awakens us to new insights (whether personal or TCC related), and clarifies our values.

## Conference 2009

### NOURISHING

Increasing our understanding and knowledge of T’ai Chi Chih

### ROOTING

Sinking into the practice with awareness and embodying new understanding

### BLOOMING

Sharing the gift of T’ai Chi Chih.

# Toward Accreditation

Workshop with Dan Pienciak  
in Newfoundland, Canada;  
November 8-10, 2008

BY SHEILA LEONARD, PBVM, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

Big steps and small steps: Sharing our amazing, unfolding journey towards accreditation. Always moving. Deeper, softer. Fowing more from the center. Taking as long as it takes. It’s as simple as that. Since July 2007 we’ve had the pleasure and privilege of having Dan, Sandy, and Antonia come to Newfoundland to share their abundance. (Dan Pienciak has come so often that he’s now an honorary Newfoundlander.) We’re eager for our April 2009 weekend with Dan and our teacher accreditation with Sandy in July 2009 – so that others, in turn, can share in the gift of T’ai Chi Chih. One student, Annette, summed up our last weekend: Dan / New Jersey / Newfoundland / New energy for all

And another student, Nelson, writes that “I generally practice alone, and I really miss getting feedback from others. I found this workshop and the previous ones to be enjoyable and helpful when it comes to refining the moves. The opportunity to spend time with other TCC students is a real treat, and I always looking forward to the next one. The instruction, motivation, and personal interaction with teachers are priceless. I find that these weekends really give me the experiential knowing that this moving meditation is something very special and extremely helpful to my spiritual development.”

May we continue to share the gift of TCC with such joy, enthusiasm, and *teh* that we leave no room for doubt that it is, indeed, as Justin says, “a form of love ... a service to humanity.” I am also reminded that, “Sometimes to keep something, we have to give it away.”



## Be A Good Teacher, Not A Nice Teacher

Intensive with Pam Towne and Antonia Cooper  
in Albuquerque, NM; November 21-24, 2008

By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Not one of the twenty-one participants at this event will forget his or her experience with Justin Stone. He appeared on the first morning to observe the warm-up practice. Assuming that all came to learn how to best move *Chi* (to become teachers), he immediately went into his unique teaching method: “Shift the weight *fully*, turn the waist *freely*, lose all tension *completely!*” It was an abrupt wake up call. Forget what you think you know and move from the *tan t’ien* – not from above the waist. For most participants, their practice fell apart. They didn’t expect this to happen; they thought they’d build on what they already “knew.”

Justin always says, “Be a good teacher, not a nice teacher.” He exemplified this adage much to the shock and discomfort of many participants. A good teacher does whatever it takes for the student to move properly so that they can experience a maximum *Chi* flow. A “nice” teacher just wants the students to like the teacher, not wanting to stress the students with demanding exactitude.

What was the reaction to Justin’s teaching? Some were shocked and hurt. One contemplated not returning on the second day and shared her reactions with the group. The result of the sharing was to deepen the bonds between all participants and help them understand what Justin was doing. As they went around in the circle sharing, they learned that each had experienced his teaching method differently. One thought the teaching method “brilliant,” comparing it to a Zen Master’s attack on mental obstacles found in his student (so as to accomplish the student’s enlightenment). But an attack on a student’s resistances can appear brutal. By the fourth day, all realized what Justin’s methods had accomplished. When Justin appeared on the last day, he pronounced, “I see much improvement!” Everyone knew that these words had been dearly won.

Any teacher planning to send a student to teacher training should seriously consider sending them to an intensive. If many of these teacher prep students hadn’t come, they would have been ill prepared for teacher training. Teacher prep students realize what they need to work on after leaving an intensive. At teacher trainings, candidates are taught how to teach and assume that the candidate already understands how to move. A deep bow goes to Pam, who led this intensive; to Antonia, who assisted her; to Carol Roeske, who co-hosted the event; and to Justin for being the “good” teacher.

*Shift  
the weight  
fully,  
turn the  
waist  
freely,  
lose all  
tension  
completely*



## A First In Mississippi

Intensive with Sandy McAlister  
in Tupelo; October 22-26, 2008

By RON RICHARDSON AND STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

October 2008 was huge for the T’ai Chi Chih teachers of North Mississippi. For the past year we schemed, planted seeds, and lay the groundwork to host our area’s first intensive. The Plymouth Bluff Center on the Tennessee–Tombigbee waterway was the perfect setting, seemingly built for peaceful TCC events. We’d had several retreats and workshops over the years but never an intensive. We privately wondered if people would come to Mississippi – a place with an incorrect reputation of women who are barefoot and pregnant and men who are redneck and illiterate. But we shouldn’t have worried; the TCC community responded well. Fifteen teachers and students from all over the country gathered with Sandy as she broadened our knowledge of this incredible moving meditation. She did an outstanding job of bringing added depth to our practice. Sandy was patient, kind, and knew the exact words to push us to a greater appreciation of the many benefits of TCC.

We added this intensive to *The Vital Force* calendar in early 2008 thinking we were the only ones having an intensive in late 2008. But at the July conference we learned that Albuquerque was planning a competing intensive one month after ours. We’d be lying if we said that didn’t scare us. Our first thought was, “There’s no way for us to compete with the home of Justin Stone and the celebration of his birthday!” It was too late for us to cancel; plane tickets had been purchased and our non-refundable deposit had been made. So we bowed our heads, plowed ahead, and planted as many seeds as possible. Teachers came through and sent some of their best students. We had the most perfect group we could have hoped for – and we had a wonderful leader. Though we didn’t have the twenty we wanted, we had the fifteen we needed to break even financially, and we believe we had a very successful intensive. A deep bow and a big Mississippi thank you to Sandy, to all our fine participants, and to TCC.

# Revitalize, Renew, Refresh, Reflect, Review, Rejuvenate, Reward, Relax, Return

A Teacher Symposium Lead by Sandy McAlister  
near Chicago; October 17-19, 2008

COMPILED BY DIANA WELSH DURKIN, GLEN ELLYN, IL

*Editor's Note: We received more important comments for this event than we can publish in this issue of The Vital Force. Stay tuned for the next installment in the next issue.*

After any event, a host reflects on moments that worked well, aspects that need improvement, and whether or not he or she would do it again. Whether the event is big or small, it requires attention to detail and brings with it just a little bit of stress. However, as a co-host of the first formal TCC Teacher Symposium, I knew this was going to be worth it. From the symposium's moment of conception, Donna McElhose and I shared a vision of how we thought it would work. We took our cue from Daniel Webster who defines a symposium as "a social gathering at which there is a free interchange of ideas."

In practicing TCC together, we considered every move and every pause right down to Cosmic Consciousness Pose. We came as teachers who value and are committed to TCC as a spiritual practice. We helped one another unfold and deepen our understanding of TCC. We afforded one another the opportunity to freely articulate personal struggles in teaching or moving. We applauded, affirmed, and copiously wrote in our notebooks every new idea and teaching technique that may work in our own classes. The evening gatherings were fruitful as well – from funny stories that made us laugh until we cried to sublime stories which altered our lives and made us cry. We retired for the night knowing that we are all connected and that TCC is one way that this bond is formed.

What worked well? Allowing the symposium to move from concept to reality. What points need attention? My ability to understand contracts without an attorney and to count money without a financial advisor. Would I host this event again? Without a doubt. I loved hosting something that I could fully participate in without all the administrative hassles (they came afterwards). I'm a different student of TCC today, a different practitioner today, a different teacher today, and know I will be different tomorrow because "a social gathering at which there [was] a free interchange of ideas" helped me embrace the newness and gloriously un-stoppable change in each moment. Thank you Justin Stone.

– DIANA WELSH DURKIN

This is the best event I've attended recently; it picked up where teacher training left off. Our group of teachers was eager to share experiences and ask any question that came to mind. I took copious notes because everything being shared was so valuable. So many aspects of TCC were covered – teaching basic principles, teaching actual movements, exchanging handouts, sharing ideas about how to advertise classes, making corrections, and more. Although we were all teaching the same 20 movements, we shared different ideas, words, and approaches. It has renewed and refreshed my interest in our TCC practice and rejuvenated and revitalized my teaching. The reward will be realized by my students and myself.

– NANCY ADAMS, RICHMOND, KY

This intense symposium – at which everyone had the opportunity to connect and communicate – offered a chance to renew, reflect, and review with an intimate group. Sandy kept us on course with her organizational skills and got to the essence of TCC and teaching. Her humor, dedication, and *teh* grounded and reassured us. We practiced, reviewed, and shared ideas and inspirations. These practical and personable strategies will be reflected in our students as we return to a more refined practice in our own settings. I am grateful to all who generously offered their tips, materials, and friendship. Thank you Diana and Donna for organizing the event. Finally, firstly, and forever, thank you to Justin for TCC, an unending renewable resource.

– TERRY SLANEY, SUGAR GROVE, IL

I so appreciated the opportunity to expand my understanding of and connection to TCC. The information, resources, and participants were exceptional. I received much greater insight about how to teach, form classes, use props, and relate to different students. I cannot grasp a better concept.

– JUDY CHANCY, ATLANTA, GA

In January 2003, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer wrote an article for *The Vital Force* about community, in which she mentioned open communication, mutual support, and renewal. These characteristics are typical of our TCC community, and I believe these teacher symposiums have the potential to strengthen our community. Sharing ideas about how to move and teach supports both new and experienced teachers. I certainly feel revitalized.

– NANCY LECRAW, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

*finally,  
firstly,  
and  
forever,  
thank  
you to  
Justin for  
TCC, an  
unending  
renewable  
resource*



## Much More Than The Sum Of Its Parts

By TINA A. POSLUSNY, GARNET VALLEY, PA

I've wanted to learn T'ai Chi from the moment I saw a group practicing at sunrise at the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. I was spending my junior year abroad and would jog in the park before breakfast. As I ran past, panting and sweating, I was intrigued by the slow movements of the group. They were silent and moved in unison. Years later I had an opportunity to take a T'ai Chi class. Imagine my surprise on the first day of class when our instructor, April Leffler, announced that this was a T'ai Chi Chih class – and it was not a martial art, but rather a moving meditation. My heart sank. Meditation? I was doomed. I had tried meditation and wound up frustrated because I couldn't think about *nothing*. (It sounds easier than it is.) Judging from the looks on my classmates' faces, they didn't know there was more than one form of T'ai Chi either.

I decided to give it a try, and I'm so glad I did. Even though it was difficult sometimes, and I felt silly or self-conscious (the Six Healing Sounds were a real challenge), I didn't let those feelings get in the way of practice. TCC gave me more energy at the same time that it helped me be more calm and relaxed. I now had helpful tools which I could use under stress.

TCC is much more than the sum of its parts. The Dalai Lama talks of the importance of being present, of being fully aware and appreciating each moment we experience. While I recognize the wisdom in his words, I'd always found it difficult to keep my mind focused on the suds of the dishwasher. I was always thinking ahead to the next moment. TCC keeps me in the present. I may still be doing a lot of running around, but thanks to TCC I'm doing it with a sense of peace.



## A Gift Beyond

By MARCY BURNS, OXNARD, CA

A fall in Tanzania, another in Spain, and another in Vietnam. These were not harmless tumbles quickly forgotten; each caused significant injuries. Perhaps they signaled an end to my traveling ... but I am leaping ahead. To understand my experience of T'ai Chi Chih, we must look at the pathway to those places.

I had not welcomed retirement. I'd had a challenging research career for 30 years, and I dreaded the unstructured days that would follow its end. I delayed retirement until I realized that my presence in the laboratory was slowing the professional development of younger colleagues. Then my beloved husband sank into dementia and left this life. My move to a beach community fulfilled a lifelong dream, but it put dear friends out of reach. A son moved his career and family to a place I could not follow. Only with love and forbearance was I able to summon the grace to smile as they left.

Travel saved me during those dark days. Being alone in a distant country was comforting when being alone at home was difficult to endure. That solace now would end; it would be foolhardy to continue to risk injury so far from home. It seemed I would have to build a new, restricted life. I found a book group, a writers' group, and new supportive friends. I felt alive again. Clarity and calm came from the Friendship of the Heart Sangha where we meditate in the tradition of Thich Nhat Han, a Buddhist Zen master. Seeking further meditative opportunity, I found Lisa Otero's twice-weekly TCC practice. Her exacting but patient teaching served me well. As I learned, I experienced a quickening *and* a quieting, but I did not yet know all that the practice would bring.

I began to feel restless. Would one more journey be possible? I traveled to ancient villages and monasteries in Turkey where walking often was treacherous. But I did not fall. Emboldened, I signed on for voyages across the Atlantic and Pacific on traditional clipper ships. As we moved with the sea, I did not fall. I traveled to Budapest and on to Transylvanian villages, and still I did not fall. It began to seem like a miracle, and I wondered how it had come about. I wonder no more: The practice of TCC has gifted me in a remarkable way.

The quieting and calming effects of the TCC movements will ensure my lifelong practice. Focus and attention, balance and strength are the unexpected and wonderful bonuses. I now stand and move with a steadier strength. I do not fear rough terrain, broken walkways, and countless stairways that are routine in the off-the-beaten path places to which I travel. TCC has given back to me the adventures of world travel. On my 81st birthday, I will travel to Morocco.

## In Search Of *Chi*

By LARRY BLOOM, SANDY SPRINGS, GA

Since the first mention of *Chi* by my TCC instructor, Sheryl Adair, my mind has inquisitively marveled about it. While not necessarily something I should be pondering, I have a strong curiosity about things I don't understand. Maybe that's how I came to earn a degree in chemical engineering many years ago. Seeing my curiosity, Sheryl introduced me to Justin's writings and the description of *Chi* as the intrinsic energy of the body or Vital Force. That sounded pretty mysterious at the time. I silently asked, "Is *Chi* real or do people believe it simply because subconsciously they want to believe it?" So I set out to find facts that point to the possibility of *Chi* as energy.

Almost all scientifically defined forms of energy are associated with a living being: electrical, chemical, thermal, radiant, mechanical, sound, atomic, and gravitational, etc. Managing these forms of energy, the brain can be thought of as the central computer that controls all bodily functions. The nervous system is like an electrical network that relays messages back and forth – sort of yinnyng and yanging from the brain to different parts of the body and back.

The brain has over 100 billion nerve cells, none of which individually has the capacity to feel or reason, control the function of our organs, extract oxygen from air, or perform any other requirement to keep us alive. However, neuroscientists consider it settled that life arises from the cooperation of billions of interconnected cells that, individually, are no smarter than an amoeba. It's a stunning idea that the human mind could arise out of such an array of mindlessness. Logic points to the possible existence of something we don't yet scientifically understand.

Given that, what intrinsic energy or Vital Force is in control? Could we call it *Chi* like the ancient Chinese? A very bright guy once wrote, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity." The author was Albert Einstein. I will respect his advice in my journey as I practice TCC and let the *Chi* live me.

*A note from Sheryl Adair: Larry also he feels the Chi – as his dancing fingers testify. He is able to let go of his very bright engineering mind quite nicely as he practices TCC.*

## Something Special Is Happening

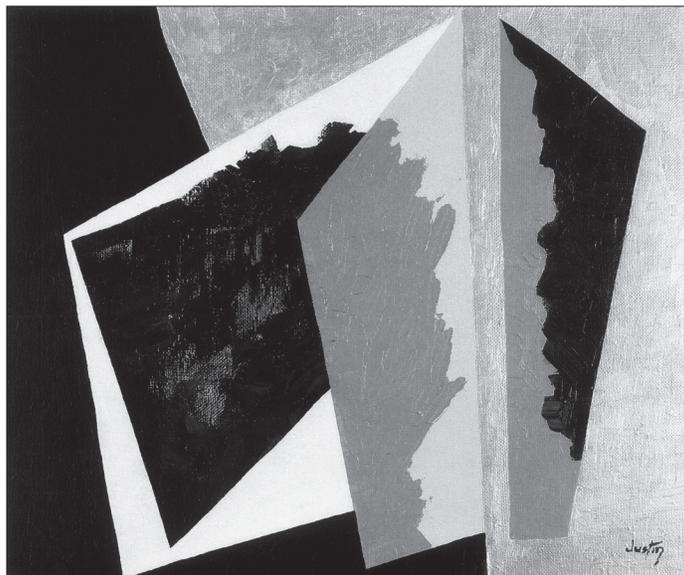
By KATHI ALLEN, TEGA CAY, SC

Over the years, I have been fortunate to learn wonderful calming techniques to help with the stress of a very long work commute into New York City. Almost 20 years ago, a friend introduced me to breathing exercises from a Louise Hay book. While taking an art therapy class, I found that taking in the beauty of nature in the Hudson River Valley was quite meditative. Three years ago a dear older sister took me to a T'ai Chi Chih class with Sr. Mary Reynolds.

TCC has proven to be an excellent tool for this weary commuter who no longer had the energy to visit a gym at 7 p.m. on her way home from work. The gifts of TCC are many. For me it was learning the movements in a group in which no loud music was present. With the focus on breathing and slow arm movements, I became hooked on the new, gentle rhythms. My two left feet seemed less clumsy while learning the leg and feet positioning. I quickly became quite fond of particular movements that brought inner joy. I smiled just hearing the names of Bass Drum and Working the Pulley. Doing TCC movements is like receiving a gift; my body knows something special is happening and it cooperates and welcomes each movement. My mind is more able to push out chatter and be available to the movements. Feeling energy flow through the upper and lower body while

*my body knows  
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special  
is happening  
and it  
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and  
welcomes  
each  
movement*

doing TCC is soothing and balancing. The symmetry of TCC is calming and lovely. I particularly remember driving home from TCC class and listening to classical music with a clear head and improved hearing.



## A New Light

By RICHARD M. LUKESH, WEST MILFORD, NJ

**M**y story begins with a two-week visit to China in March 2008. Throughout my visit, I couldn't help but notice people, practically everywhere, doing a gentle form of exercise.

On the faces of the young and old, I noticed a sense of calm. I was almost hypnotized by their gracefulness. Shortly after returning to the U.S., a health bulletin advertised T'ai Chi Chih classes with certified instructor Margaret O'Connor at Chilton Memorial Hospital in New Jersey. With nothing to lose, I enrolled and wondered, "What's

a 62-year-old man taking a course like this for?"

*poem  
after  
poem  
emerged;  
the floodgates  
opened*

I was one of two men in a class of twenty-five. Margaret explained the meaning of TCC and how it differs from T'ai Chi. She taught Around the Platter and Around the Platter Variation. While they were really effortless, somehow they also felt really good. By

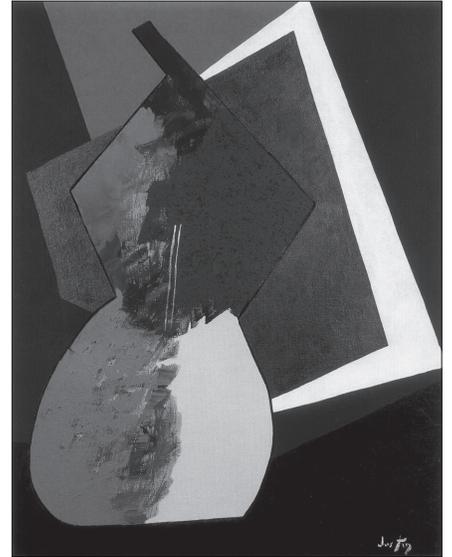
the end of the first class, I eagerly awaited the second. In the days that followed, I developed a routine that included morning prayers, feeding the birds, and doing the TCC movements that I'd most recently learned. My faithful dog, Satchel, would lie near my side as I practiced; he seemed to know not to disturb me. As I worked through the movements, I became aware of the ever-changing light on the leaves and tree bark. And I recall a moment when the leaves looked like a cascading waterfall. I developed a keen understanding of light – perhaps akin to what Claude Monet understood and expressed in his paintings.

After the fifth week, I noticed physical changes too. Having been diagnosed with diabetes five years ago, it's been a constant battle to maintain my blood sugar levels. I watch my diet, walk two miles a day, and more. One morning, after pricking my finger for the day's first reading, I was surprised that my blood sugar had dropped twenty points! I took it a second time to confirm the unexpected. I weighed the constants and the variables, and the only significant factor I could identify was TCC. My blood sugar numbers stabilized after that.

Two weeks later, another surprise was in store. I'd been working on a book of religious poetry, *The Cyrenean Prayers*, for some ten years and had been experiencing a writer's slump. After the seventh TCC class, as I was walking through the forest, I was struck with an idea for a poem that I had been mulling over for some time. The thought was there but it didn't want to take shape; the words refused to be committed to paper. When I returned home, I sat down at the computer and my fingers began hitting all the right keys. In the hours

that followed, poem after poem emerged; the floodgates opened. I couldn't believe that I had finally crossed the finish line with this book. Once again, I looked at the constants and the variables, and ... you know the rest.

I truly believe that I've received a glimmer of an understanding about the Knowledge of Supreme Ultimate. It's difficult to put into words – the feelings, the peace, the serenity that TCC provides. I do know I'm more sensitive to light and its nuances. I know I'm more in touch with certain muses. And I know why a certain 62-year-old man took a TCC course. It's simple really: Joy Through Movement.



## When Do I Practice?

By JOYCE MANNING, ALLENDALE, NJ

**A**fter finishing two beginner T'ai Chi Chih sessions with my teacher, Dorene Krause, I started practicing more and more at home. With each practice, the wonderful benefits and joys of TCC started manifesting. Starting my day with serenity and calm is just what the doctor ordered, so to speak. Unfortunately, though, I can't start every day with a practice. And that's created some turmoil for me. I tried to practice daily, looking at the clock knowing I was late for work or needing to be someplace. But it certainly wasn't conducive to serenity and calm. Dorene would often tell us that the effects of TCC practice are cumulative, and when that finally sank in, I found a way to practice every day.

If I don't have time to do a complete practice at one time, I do half or part of the practice and finish the remainder later that day. I've learned that, while this isn't ideal, I can still benefit from the TCC practice I *can* do. Instead of my mind wandering and telling me to speed up during Rocking Motion, I find an inner calm and take the necessary time to perform each movement correctly. When do I practice? Quite often.

# UCLA Using T'ai Chi Chih In Research Studies – An Update

By KATE HOLLISTER, HERMOSA BEACH, CA

It has been my privilege to be the instructor for ongoing research studies being conducted at UCLA to investigate whether a regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih can ameliorate issues of sleep disturbance and depression faced by older adults. The three current studies underway are geared toward aging adults, from age 50 to upwards of 80, including two insomnia studies lead by Dr. Michael R. Irwin of the Cousins Center for Psychoneuro-immunology, David Geffen School of Medicine.

The first insomnia study began in 2006, and it's a 5-year study with participants meeting for one-hour sessions of TCC instruction twice a week for 16 weeks. The second insomnia study began in 2007 and targets breast cancer survivors, with participants meeting once a week for 2-hour sessions over a period of 12 weeks. The third study is a 3-year project being conducted by Dr. Helen Lavretsky of the Semel Institute, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, investigating the effects of regular TCC practice on depression in older adults. The participants in this study meet once a week for 2-hour sessions over a period of 10 weeks.

The theory behind Dr. Irwin's insomnia studies is that one reason people experience insomnia is that the tension held in the body all day remains in the body as we try to sleep. Therefore, if we can reduce stress in the body during the day (with TCC), perhaps the increased levels of relaxation can be carried into sleep to produce a better quality of sleep.

Dr. Irwin's studies are randomized, with one group receiving drugs or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and one group receiving TCC instruction. In an interview appearing in the July 2, 2008 issue of *Reuters Health*, Dr. Irwin reported that "More than half of older adults experience sleeping problems at least a few times a week." He went on to explain, "While CBT can ease insomnia, few therapists have the training to offer this type of treatment, which is also relatively expensive. And while aerobic exercise can also help people sleep better, vigorous workouts aren't an option for many seniors." He continued to note that, "When TCC group members were practicing on their own, they logged close to 20 to 30 minutes a day on average, which is pretty remarkable." Dr. Irwin

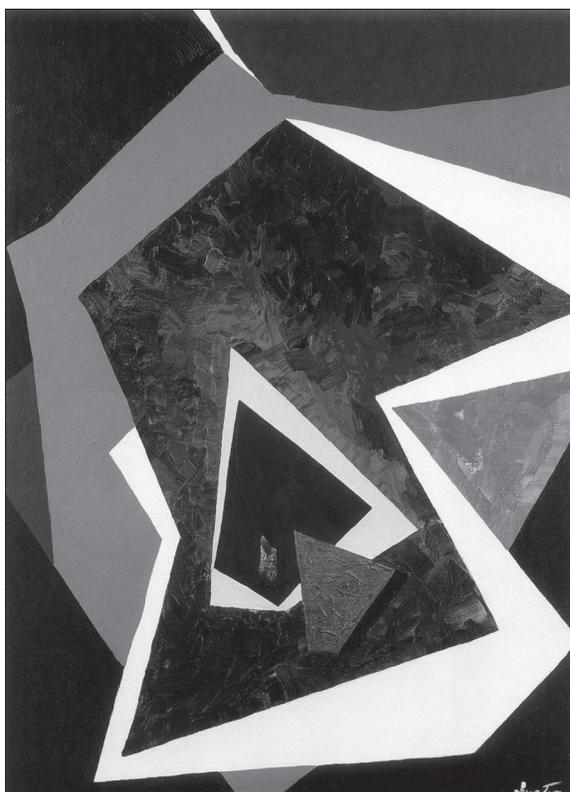
added, "The other thing I thought was pretty remarkable is how few dropouts we had in our study" – only seven of 59 people in the TCC group did not complete the study. In the current insomnia studies, the participants are followed for one year after the conclusion of TCC instruction.

Additionally, as Dr. Irwin pointed out in a recent interview conducted by CBS, TCC has been selected for these studies because of its simplicity, since it can be learned in a relatively short period of time and a larger number of the participants are able to continue their practice after the instruction period is completed. Two of the participants from a previously published

*TCC [was] selected for these studies because of its simplicity*

study (geared toward investigating the effects of TCC on preventing shingles) were also interviewed regarding the benefits they observed from their practice relating to their sleep since the study concluded a few years ago. Both participants reported better sleep quality since they'd incorporated TCC into their daily routine. When I spoke with one participant privately, she admitted that she'd gradually stopped doing her TCC practice and was currently on a nightly dose of sleep medication. After our brief conversation, she was inspired to resume her TCC practice, had slept two consecutive nights without the aid of sleep medication, and was looking forward to continuing TCC.

Since these studies have not been completed, there is no data available at this time, and I am not at liberty to report research findings. However, I continue to receive unsolicited comments from the TCC participants relating to the positive side effects they receive from their regular practice. These include coping with stressful situations in a calmer fashion and an overall feeling of calmness, less joint discomfort, more energy, better balance, more flexibility, and a more positive outlook. We all know the benefits of a regular TCC practice. It's nice to have the scientific community becoming aware and spreading the word, as well.



# A Retreat Experience

BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

As both a practitioner and teacher of TCC, I was thrilled to attend a recent TCC weekend retreat in Albuquerque with Carmen Brocklehurst. Prior to the weekend, I felt my personal practice had become internally sloppy, not as alive as it could be. And as a teacher, it is useful to hear new language, alternative metaphors, and different approaches to the TCC movements to share with my students. Some of the insights and instruction shared by Carmen during the weekend related directly to the TCC form and individual movements. Other observations related more practically with life. Both are expressed below in the hope that others may benefit.

## THE CHI

“The *Chi* is coming at you in equal proportion to you going through it. Be aware of this substance as you move through it. Be aware of it between the hands in movements with polarity. Be aware of it in the hands as they move through ‘very heavy air.’ The aliveness is all around us. We are actively (not passively) relating with it as we do TCC. The *Chi* is always there: how do you access it? Connect to it! Connect through the soles of the feet. Connect through the *tan t’ien*. Connect through a feeling awareness of this substance. Connect through every cell in the body. The body will start to feel it and respond as a unit.”

## SOFTNESS AND SURRENDER

“If you’re not feeling anything, you have to say ‘YES’ to it. But you have to say ‘YES’” ... “We are learning how to keep moving through substance. *Seijaku* can help with this learning.” ... “If the hands are like a wet dishcloth or a ‘fish handshake,’ there is no substance. This feeling is mistaken softness.” ... “Spend time with Justin in his softness in any way (through his instructional DVD, his music, his *Justin Stone Speaks on TCC* audio CD, anything) and then see what comes of it.” ... “If all your worldly needs are taken care of, then you can really let go.” ... “We are one hundred percent more effective when we heat up or warm up through TCC.”

## GENERAL COMMENTS

“What causes us to look more deeply? Intuition. It doesn’t matter which teacher you’ve been with. Go home and put in Justin’s DVD and compare your movements with Justin’s.” ... “The shining light is here in the middle of our busy lives. It’s here in the

movement [re: Pulling in the Energy].” ... “The more you learn about TCC, the more it teaches you.” ... “When people talk from the Real, they don’t have to speak loudly.” ... “If you only have time for a shortened practice, do some forward and backward movements *and* some side-to-side movements. It’s best to do a few of both kinds.” ... “If you’ve finished a movement and nothing happens or you don’t feel anything, find the *Chi*: go back and look for it. Did it get stuck somewhere?” ... “Put conscious attention to what you’re doing *now*. This is how you stay grounded. You make it so.” ... “The more you pay attention, the more exquisite it will become.” ... “Be aware of the close. It is not meant to be spongy. Where do you feel its solidity?” ... “Just be open to the energy coming through and let it through. It wants to be part of us.” ... “When you’re experiencing energy that is making you jittery rather than solid, feel the bottoms of the feet and do Joyous Breath.” ... “The reason there is no particular way to breathe in TCC is because it is not a martial art (but it has all the benefits.)” ... “When we are in a listening mode with people or being of service, we have a tendency to hold our breath. Breathe!”



# Mind-Body Disconnect

BY STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

New students of TCC are sometimes so disconnected from their bodies that their first tries at the simplest of movements are awkward and uncoordinated – so much so that it’s initially hard for them to see how they will ever get through the beginning lesson. However, if they honor the disconnectedness that is troubling them, beginners find within themselves a yearning to feel more connected, more grounded, and more at home in their bodies. If nourished, this yearning will guide them to rediscover their forgotten mind-body connection, which of course, leads them right into the heart of *Chi*.

As your new students begin to perceive and feel their own *Chi* more clearly, their experience of how they should move begins to alter, not just within the time set aside for TCC practice but also in how they move outside of practice. Through the joy of movement – and the near ritual of the TCC practice – the novice begins to reconnect, relax, and explore their inner *Chi*. In doing so, they return to their deepest roots, taking nourishment from that greater wellspring of *Chi*, the universal life-source shared by all.

### ~ WE'RE THROWING A PARTY & EVERYONE IS INVITED ~

Considering our far-flung internet exposure with Wikipedia and YouTube, T'ai Chi Chih is continuing to embrace the 21st century – this time by creating a group on Facebook.com, the wildly popular friendster and social utility site that lets users connect with those with similar interests. How can it work for TCC? Let us count the ways; the possibilities are truly infinite. To start things out, we've



Find us on  
Facebook

posted links to articles referencing TCC and to a few TCC-only websites. Beneath those links

are places for folks to comment – students and teachers alike. It's incredibly powerful software; the basics are easy to use. For instance, under the link highlighting "T'ai Chi Chih May Help Elderly Sleep" (which links to a story on UPI – United Press International), you can comment about how TCC has helped *your* insomnia. Share your experience; it'll help others become convinced that TCC may help them. You can also answer a question posed by a teacher or student to keep the thread (or conversation) going. And you can share links to related web sites, post calendar items, add videos and photos, write notes, and more. You can invite friends, students, and teachers to participate. The more the merrier.

### ~ GROUNDSWELL OF GRASS ROOTS ~

This method of developing communities is referred to as "Web 2.0." It's all about harnessing social media outlets to spread the word out about a movement, group, or idea. The thinking is that the best endorsements for something come from its community of adherents and loyal users. Instead of relying solely on Good Karma Publishing, for instance, to tell you how great Justin Stone's DVD is, folks who've used his DVD can tell you with their own voices. These days,

this seems to be the most trusted form of spreading the word.

It offers a vibrant, healthy, and transparent way to connect, and it offers itself as an egalitarian place for equals. It's also a way of attracting a younger group of users and having a centralized and richly layered place for media and others to learn about TCC.

### ~ HOW DO I GET CONNECTED & JOIN THE CONVERSATION? ~

Go to <http://groups.to/taichichih/> and if you're not already a registered user of Facebook (which is free), you'll need to create an email address/account to log on. To do that, click "No thanks, take me straight to..." which will take you to the basic T'ai Chi Chih page. You can scan the main page without joining the group. But if you'd like to join the conversation and post, click the green button in the upper left corner to sign up for Facebook. Then you're good to go.

### ~ AN IMPORTANT CAVEAT ~

There are basic guidelines we need to adhere to, the most important of which are similar to those advocated by *The Vital Force*: It's about keeping T'ai Chi Chih pure and simple, just the way Justin Stone wants it. Please do not mix postings about TCC with other practices. There's plenty to say about TCC – and one's personal experiences with it, and the effects and benefits of it – all by itself. Additionally, if you are posting photos or videos, please consider if they depict the movements being done correctly. There's little use in spreading TCC if we're setting an incorrect example by not paying utmost attention to its principles. Done with integrity, we have the ability to attract an infinite number of new practitioners with this "service to humanity" and this "form of love," as Justin Stone, the Originator, so eloquently reminds us.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

## The Lighter Side

1. When teaching alignment, I usually mention how the spine is like a string of pearls or a stack of coins. After T'ai Chi Chih practice, one student seemed pleasantly surprised as he stated, "I usually hear cracks in my neck, but not today. I feel more limber. I think my stack of coins shifted."

2. At times I have had some unusual things happen while teaching TCC. For example, one time a woman stopped right in the middle of rocking motion (as her hands rolled over) to check out her nails. And during seated TCC, one student reached forward and picked up a magazine while we were right in the middle of doing a movement. I admit I was momentarily pulled off center by the thought of her simply stopping to read. "I'm so hot," she said, as she used the magazine to fan her face.

3. I arrived to teach seated TCC at the retirement home in the ceramics room instead of the usual auditorium. Two birds hidden in a cage in the corner were chattering away. As I moved the chairs into a circle, the sound of the chatter became increasingly louder. As the seniors took their seats, they wondered about the noise. One lady thought I was playing with a squeaky toy. Another lady fiddled with her hearing aid thinking it was faulty because of the squeaky sounds. I laughed as I explained about the birds and mentioned how interesting it would be to see how they were affected by TCC. On the very first movement, Rocking Motion, the birds quieted down and remained quiet for the entire 45-minute class. After class, some seniors noticed the change, and as soon as everyone started talking, the birds resumed chattering again.

SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

# T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
February 14	Workshop w/Antonia	Portland, OR	Jim Shorr & Roberta Taggart taggart1@earthlink.net 541-654-0566
March 19-22	Intensive w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
March 27-28	Workshop w/ Sandy	West Sussex United Kingdom	Ev Hanson-Florin ev.florin@gmail.com (00) 44 (0) 1243 641-465
April 2-5	Retreat w/ Antonia	Albuquerque, NM	Carol Roeske roeskescands@msn.com 505-275-5935
April 20-21	Retreat w/ Antonia	St. Louis, MO	Susan Kissinger joythrumovement@sbcglobal.net 314-647-7832
May 4-9	Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	San Antonio, TX	Sr. Alice Holden sparks-1@sbcglobal.net 210-525-1232
June 21-25	Intensive w/ Sandy	Santa Barbara, CA	Tony Johansen trjohansen@msn.com 805-680-6731 / 805-687-1045
July 16-19	Teacher Conference	Nebraska City, NE	John & Roberta Taggart taggartjl@earthlink.net 541-654-0566
July 19-21	Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam	Nebraska City, NE	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
July 27- August 1	Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Grand Falls-Windsor NL, Canada	Sheila Leonard sheilaleonard@nf.sympatico.ca 709-579-7863 / 709-727-7863
October 25	Teacher Renewal w/ Pam	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
October 26-31	Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
November 15-20	Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Albuquerque, NM	Christa Keller 505-899-3873 christa_keller@comcast.net

## MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

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

March 19-22	Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks judyhendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810 (after 5pm)
April 17-19	Workshop w/ Dan Pienciak	St. John's, NL Canada	Sheila Leonard sheilaleonard@nf.sympatico.ca 709-579-7863/727-7863
April 17-19	Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Edmonton, AB Canada	Gail Terriff tai_chi_chih_edmonton@hotmail.com 780-430-6594

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