

The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

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for teachers & students

February 2013

Justin Gave Thanks

(More) 20th Century Psalms

BY JUSTIN STONE

If things don't go well, try giving.

~ ~ ~

The change won't come through psychology. We do what we do and think what we think because of what we are, not vice-versa. The devotional man expresses devotion. We have created our vibration (the flow of the Vital Force), and it, in turn, creates us. The merry-go-round goes round.

~ ~ ~

"Should we fast, eat meat, have sex, etc?" These are useless questions, what Paul Reps calls "verbal delusionary." When you live with little greed, anger and delusion ... that is real fasting. If you lived with none, you would not be here.

~ ~ ~

Spirituality (accord with Reality) and sentimentality or emotional consciousness do not go together. Sorry.

~ ~ ~

Each death is also a birth. How do you know we are not dying into something better? So why all the grief? Are we grieving for the departed or are we feeling sorry for ourselves?

~ ~ ~

Nature is "impersonal." It doesn't give a hoot about your little ego satisfactions.

It's always easy to find loves but difficult to find a companion. In this world it is best to have a little poetry in you.

~ ~ ~

The lavender skies of Kyoto will soften the sharpest edge.



*Reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing.
This title is currently out-of-print.*

The more joyous you are, the closer you are to God. The truth is, however, you are never apart from God.

~ ~ ~

Most people introspect by worrying about individual problems. This is not finding out "Who and What you are." This Life Force will manifest in strange places, bursting out in isolated plants springing from bare rocks. It is almost absurd in its urge to express, to transform. We move from "potential" to actual – essence to function.

~ ~ ~

How we rationalize our actions! This never convinces anyone else, but it tends to salve our conscience. When there is no longer a need to rationalize, enlightenment isn't far away.

~ ~ ~

When the great Japanese Zen Master, Hakuin, experienced his great Enlightenment (he had had numerous minor Satori experiences), he said: "After this, seeing the things of the world was like seeing the back of my own hand." Who is self, who is other?

~ ~ ~

All life is a purification. We see it only in the physical. "Illness" is purification.

May The Vital Force Be With You

TEACHER WEBSITE DATABASE: The drop down menu on www.taichichih.org/the-teachers remains out of commission from the website hacking last year. But the downloadable PDFs (also on this same webpage), with teacher names sorted alphabetically by name and/or by region, are available to all and updated every six weeks.

GRATITUDE FOR VF VOLUNTEERS: Special thanks go out to Mary Ruiz, Mary White and Joyce Veerkamp – who maintain the database, subscriptions and much more for *The Vital Force* and www.taichichih.org. Their efforts, and indomitable spirits, are heroic.

FACEBOOK: Enormous appreciation, too, to Lisa Otero, the community manager for the T'ai Chi Chih Facebook page (www.facebook.com/taichichih), which has grown to a resounding 1200+ voices. Lisa poses questions about practice, inspiring quotations by Justin Stone, and sets the table to get a robust conversation going. Check it out.

PHOTOS OF TCC PRACTITIONERS: Huge thanks to professional photographer, Andrea Cole (Minneapolis, Minnesota), for her super images of the local community practicing T'ai Chi Chih. They are being used in *The Vital Force*, our www.taichichih.org website, Pinterest and Flickr. It's all in the service of spreading the word about our practice.

TCC EXPERIENCES NEEDED: *The Vital Force* is your publication, and it will only continue to exist if enough readers write about their experiences with T'ai Chi Chih. (A typically expansive call for submissions returned only a tiny response of writings for this issue.) Don't be shy about sharing. And please don't think you have to be a perfect writer.

VITAL FORCE ARCHIVES – FREE TO DOWNLOAD: Thanks to incredibly generous contributors, we were able to scan, post and offer bullet points for every issue available since *The Vital Force* began publishing in 1985. Visit www.taichichih.org/vital-force-archives to download free out-of-print back issues.

SINGLE BACK ISSUES: For issues published since 2007, if there are printed copies available, they may be purchased on www.taichichih.org/vital-force-back-issues. When an issue sells out, we will move it to the archive page. But not until they are sold out.

The 44-page May 2012 Justin Stone “memorial” issue is also available at www.taichichih.org/vital-force-back-issues for \$15 domestic, \$18 international shipping.

WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Please update your contact information on www.taichichih.org by sending an email to changes@taichichih.org. And please ask all active teachers you know to do so. There were hundreds of bounced emails for current subscribers when sending Justin's death notice.

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Submission Guidelines

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to 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.

Web Site Updates

The on-line database (for 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.

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at tcc@kimgrant.com or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674. Memberships are \$40/year, \$50/year for international. Members receive four issues of The Vital Force. The printed annual Teachers Directory costs an additional \$15/year. It is also available for free at www.taichichih.org. If, for some reason, you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: vfmembership@yahoo.com. • Design: Amy K. Brown

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Deadline: April 1
Publication Date: Mid-May
Climb The Joyous Mountain:
 What do you like about it?
 How do you use it in your classes?

Deadline: July 1
Publication Date: Mid-Aug
Spiritual Odyssey:
 What do you like about it?
 How do you use it in your classes?

Deadline: Oct 1
Publication Date: Mid-Nov
 Overcoming Obstacles to Preparing
 Teacher Candidates

Deadline: Jan 1
Publication Date: Mid-Feb
 To Be Decided.

Because of financial pressures, *The Vital Force* reserves the right to ship via Media Rate instead of First Class, which may result in a delay of one week or so, depending on where you live.

TEDx ABQED Talk: Benefits Of TCC With High School Students

By AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

“I just wrote a paper on Plato in an hour—usually it takes me three days!” That exclamation was made from “Mariah”, one of my high school advanced T'ai Chi Chih students. She couldn't believe it: **“The paper virtually wrote itself!”**

It doesn't surprise me that my student had such creative ease with an assignment that would typically be more challenging. The moving meditation practice of T'ai Chi Chih, soft and effortless, circulates and balances the body's natural energy or “Chi” and **leaves the practitioner in a relaxed but alert state**, one that is an ideal brain state for learning.

Admittedly, the high school kids in my T'ai Chi Chih PE [physical educational] class are not thinking about “Plato Power” when they sign up. They don't have to change into P.E. clothes. **They heard it was “chill.”**

And then (happily clad in regular clothes), the first day of class arrives. What on earth? What could these silly, excruciatingly slow movements have to do with anything remotely worthwhile?

One high school student, “Jennifer,” writes, “T'ai Chi Chih is great. To be perfectly honest, though, in the beginning I thought it was ridiculous. I enjoyed it, but I really felt I'd rather be doing something else.”

Little do my students know how closely I can relate to their initial reactions to learning something so different from what they are used to. I moved to Albuquerque 13 years ago specifically to meditate with and learn from my teacher, Justin Stone (the originator of T'ai Chi Chih). I had what you might call **an existential longing** for my entire life, and nothing quite ever filled it. The longing disappeared almost immediately upon my arrival. However, in the early years of those twice-weekly meditation sessions and discussions afterwards, I just couldn't figure out what was going on. I finally wrote Justin a letter. “Dear Justin: This is so hideously boring I can't stand it!”

Editor's Note: This is the transcript of Amy's presentation, the video of which will be posted on www.TEDxABQED.com in a few weeks.

Look for it and be sure to 'like' or 'recommend' it -- in order to help propel it to the national (and super-high visibility) Ted.com.talks website.

Justin didn't react in a typical, admonishing way for such a naïve outburst. Instead, he simply asked, “Do you remember what it was like when you were learning Japanese?”

Somehow that simple

question shifted my impatience into a different place, one that could **tolerate the discomfort of not knowing**. My teacher was teaching unity, wholeness, a non-dual way of being that the mind alone could never understand.

So it goes with teaching T'ai Chi Chih to teenagers. They, too, are learning a new language, one of heightened awareness and energy flow. And with the cultivation of heightened awareness, students are naturally led to heightened focus and increased powers of concentration. They are learning to be present within their bodies, not just in their minds. This alertness and engaged presence (of their whole being) then **spills over into the rest of their academic day and their lives**.

Jennifer goes on to say, “As the school year progressed, I began to look forward to my class each day. It was relaxing, and seemed a time of clarity. I processed a lot while I was practicing. Then, it got to the point where I began to turn my thoughts off and focus on the soles of my feet.”

[Amy pauses here to teach Rocking Motion to audience.]

In T'ai Chi Chih class, the high school students are not taught what to feel or what to experience. And yet, through focused awareness and chi circulation, the students tap into **a wordless source**, one that is beyond conditioning.

[Three kids share what their experience of TCC is. You'll have to watch the TEDxABQED talk to hear their wonderful observations.]

T'ai Chi Chih provides a soothing balm to the students in my P.E. class, an antidote to their stressful academic and emotional lives, almost like **a cleansing bath for mind and body**. We know, too, of its tremendous health benefits: strengthens the immune system and balances blood pressure just to name a few.

There are many ways to stimulate the learning process. T'ai Chi Chih, whose name literally means “Knowledge of the Way of Energy” teaches students that they have infinite access to this source energy which seems to stimulate the very qualities we know are important in a school setting and in life.

T'ai Chi Chih is easy to learn, the “effort of no effort” and it is joyful. I remember the jubilant face of “Cedric.” We had just finished a practice outside. He came bounding up and said, “I don't know how to explain it. **The sky looks bluer**. The trees are brighter. I feel so happy for no reason at all.”

T'ai Chi Chih needs to be made available as a Physical Education option for students in our schools.

Whether it's joy comes in the form of calm during a test, emotional equanimity, creative ease with an assignment or even discovery of an inner awareness previously unknown, T'ai Chi Chih is **a powerfully supportive tool** for these high school students as they journey into young adulthood. And, it is my great good fortune to be able to share it with them each and every day.

Learning TCC: Infinite Love

BY CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

We remember our own invitation from the universe to learn T'ai Chi Chih. Some of us were not too sure what this new set of movements held in store for us. We had not yet learned they were a beautiful discipline. We were amazed that what looked easy, when we watched others doing the movements, was not really very easy for us. What was the difference?

Where was the softness? Where was the love?

Even watching closely, we found we missed small things, like the fact that the back heel was not to come up very high. The less attention we paid to the back heel, the higher it rose. Instead, as the body moved forward, we tried to make the movement happen – by moving forward too quickly and not staying

*our teacher
could only
see our
sincerity
(teh)*

at the same level throughout the movement. Because our body was undisciplined, we could not find the feeling of flowing, which then caused us to bring the heel up too high. Our teacher smiled, even though we were moving as if we were not paying attention. There

was little coordination between the top and bottom of our body and no release at the waist. Our teacher could only see our sincerity (*teh*), infinite love.

Flowing looked so beautiful that **we tried to imitate it, but alas**, we did not know that we needed to let go and feel the flow inside. The more we imagined what the movement was supposed to be, the more we “tried” to flow, the less we were able to do it. Our own being would not allow us to lie to ourselves; we thought ourselves ungifted, unyielding and unloving. All of these assumptions set up blocks. The blocks inside of us would not let us turn our waist; we moved our shoulders instead. We could not move our legs and feet easily. Instead, each movement was an effort. Where was the loving, flowering of life?

So today, we are challenged again. Will we give up, or not even start? Or will we give in to infinite love? What does it mean to stand for something? Something that holds us up, tall and soft. It strengthens our backbone to bring light into the world. From the beginning we let go, we give in, not out, and learn to love and share the *Chi*. Happy New Year.



My Own Song

BY DORENE KRAUSE, MIDLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

I used to sing so rarely, and certainly off key, my world a cacophony of sound. Nothing played in harmony. Life pulled me in and spun me round and round.

One day my body screamed at me – “Slow down! And breathe in deep.

Listen to life’s melody. Let your inner music speak.”

At first I could not hear it, being silenced for so long.

But when, at last, I heard its whisper, I listened to its song.

Unaware I owned (and wrote) this music deep within my soul.

Just a simple, quiet ballad – not exactly rock and roll.

The music played on. It drew me in. A smile emerged on my face.

How long had it been sleeping ... waiting ... In my quiet inner space.

The rhythm of this music has really settled in.

I feel MY soulful notes being played, emanate from within.

I FEEL it when I simply breathe and when I walk about.

Now joyous songs, I write myself, have turned MY inside out.

The “who I am” changed because I stopped and listened just by chance.

Now I sing, right from my heart. I may even learn to dance.



Minnesotans are fun to move with, don't you think?

Conference 2013

August 1-4, Minnesota

JUDY GEORGE & DEB BERTELSEN,
CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Excitement is mounting. People are already checking out the invitation and signing up for the conference. We are already “encircling you in *Chi*.” Topics under consideration by engaging speakers and for breakout sessions include Prajna; A New Awareness for Grounding; Disability & *Chi*; and Issues for New Teachers. Stay tuned and check www.taichichih.org/conference_2013 for updates.



Please come refine your movements with us.
We could use your help ;-)

Social Media BY KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Flickr

This is the world's largest photo repository and millions of people search on Flickr for their areas of interest. If you have good quality images of yourself or others practicing T'ai Chi Chih, please upload them to www.flickr.com/photos/taichichih – so that we may create a robust

image database to show the world what this moving meditation looks like. So that they may be found, be sure to “tag” your images with the following keywords: “tai chi chih, tai chi, Justin Stone, meditation, qigong, qi gong, chi gong, good karma publishing, gkp.” If you are uncertain as to how to upload your photos, you may also send them to me at tcc@kimgrant.com.



Pinterest

We're creating a presence, too, at this wildly popular virtual water cooler (which just happens to be our demographic!): www.pinterest.com/taichichih. Please feel free to repin images already uploaded, and pin your own. Have fun. Maybe you want to Instagram a few of your images? Pass around some of Justin's quotations. Follow us. Like us.

Twitter

I'm looking for about 10 Twitter foot soldiers. You don't have to know how to use Twitter; I can/will teach you. But you do need a willingness to dive in. Send an email to tcc@kimgrant.com. Help me unleash the power of Twitter.

Peace

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF, North Plainfield, New Jersey

Most of us are familiar with the song: “Let There Be Peace on Earth” by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, popular in the 1960s. This title could be our theme as T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students. The following words are “and let it begin with me.” Justin often commented that if everyone in the world practiced TCC, there would be peace. Our world has been anything but peaceful with tensions between warring nations; many natural disasters, such as tornados, earthquakes, fires; and most recently Hurricane Sandy in the Northeast. Our hearts mourn once again in the wake of yet another massacre of young children in Newtown, Connecticut. There will always be these tensions in our world and in ourselves.

We know that the faithful practice of the TCC form begins its work of transformation on all levels of one's being – body, mind and spirit. This includes the cellular level, with every “cell singing with joy.” And the grooves in the brain, produced by *vashanas* – habit energies – begin to heal, so that one begins to move from the center, core

of one's being, rather than by a thoughtless reaction. The psyche also comes into balance as the *anima* (in Jungian psychology, the feminine aspect of a man's personality – early 20th century Latin meaning: breath, soul, spirit) and *animus* (in Jungian psychology, the masculine aspect of a woman's personality – 19th century Latin meaning: mind, spirit) begin to emerge in new ways. These also refer to the true inner self as opposed to the outer persona. In reflecting on this aspect of ourselves and the inner change that evolves, I wonder how central this may be to Justin's understanding of the “uncarved block?”

How truly amazing all of this is in considering that it is accomplished by “the effort of no effort” and of “letting go,” whether that is of ego, or as simply stepping aside to allow the opponent to pass by unharmed.

Inner peace seems to be a basic benefit or gift of the practice. So many have expressed this in one way or another over the years. The inmates of Folsom Prison and other facilities experience an inner peace that gives strength to allow them to remain calm in very stressful situations.

This peace is experienced at the core of our being, where we feel centered and grounded. It gives a sense of certainty, “knowing who and what you are.” **This sense of knowing, based in Chih, extends from our deepest inner integrity** to the outer limits of the most distant constellations in that embrace of the universal energy. At its core is the mystery of *Chi*, circulating and balancing, resulting in a deep sense of well-being and wholeness in the never-ending invitation to “become.” We enter into the flow... the presence ... the awareness, and it is as if we have just begun to know, when the discovery of our deepest selves takes on another level of consciousness.

It is the inner peace that is experienced after a practice while sitting in silence, allowing ourselves to “receive.” “No thinking, no technique, no mantra repetition, no watching the breath, but just sitting quietly in a chair.” Justin would say, “You may receive more than you bargained for.”

The gift of practice presents us with the joy of recognizing peace as we perceive it in our daily lives. We come to a deeper appreciation of that inner stillness and find ourselves being grateful for everything. “I don't remember what I was like before T'ai Chi Chih.” Change, evolution, enlightenment, certainty, joy, peace. May each of you experience new levels of each in the New Year.



Pyramid Poems

i
listen
in the rest
to the music
of stillness
without
form
– SANDY McALISTER

breathe
yin yang
intention
to be here now:
beyond me,
my, mine,
ah
– ALICE HOLDEN

sigh
yawning
relaxing
soles of the feet
surrender
be here
now
– DIANA WRIGHT

wife
sharing
T'ai Chi Chih
one more piece in
the puzzle
of one-
ness
– TONY JOHANSEN

i
must lose
ownership
of the outcome
to be here
in the
now
– JOCELYN SAMSON

Lessons From Hurricane Sandy

BY DAN PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

Justin Stone often said, “Softness means letting go.” He also taught about living from a state of “non-attachment.” In 12 years of hosting T'ai Chi Chih intensives and teacher accreditations, the first time I ever faced cancelling an event was October 27th, when I received a call of great concern from Antonia. Sixteen people planned to travel from as far as Canada, reservations and arrangements had all been completed, but forecasters warned of an unprecedented storm. My mind (ego?) refused to accept that this could happen. Our event was set on the Atlantic Ocean on a barrier island that now is all but destroyed (and in some places no longer exists).

That night I sent an email stating that, for everyone's safety, the Intensive was canceled. I spent the next day in shock, making hurricane preparations. The next night, the house was rattled for some 12 hours as if by a freight train, and New Jersey was plunged into darkness. We moved to a friend's home for six days, returned to our home for two days, then moved out again when power was lost in a second raging storm that dumped a foot of heavy snow, downing even more trees and power lines than the original “superstorm.”

What does all this have to do with TCC? In hindsight, I see I allowed anger, fear and a general state of chaos to get the better of me. I failed to practice TCC when I needed it most. No one suffered from this mindless self-deprivation but me.

I'm grateful I came to my senses after three days and began the day with TCC. It was like returning to my “true home.” My outlook and demeanor began changing immediately. I started to release frustration and anger over lost work and weeks of irretrievably lost income. Compassion was awakened for those whose losses made my upsets look like a picnic in the park. Gratitude for life, health and safety, and TCC soothed my wounded ego, which continued to scream lies of fear and self-pity. The hope and motivation to move on, and even re-schedule this Intensive at another location in January, began to take over. I have TCC to thank.

So, as Justin Stone often said, “There's only one thing I ask of you: Practice! Practice when you feel like it. Practice when you *don't feel like it*. The rewards will be great.”



Flowing Back To Rest

BY PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA

One of the blessings of a new year is the feeling of a fresh beginning, a chance to start over, an opportunity to try something new, challenging ourselves. As a teacher, I have the opportunity each time I begin a new eight-week series of classes to try something new. One might think that after 27 years of teaching I would run out of new ideas but, thank goodness, there always seems to be a new awareness in my own practice that sparks a fresh idea for teaching or at least a new approach.

One of those new approaches this year will be an emphasis on feeling the weight settle evenly into both feet, feeling it *balanced* evenly between the left foot and right foot while in the rest position between moves. As teachers we often say, “Bring the attention to the soles of the feet,” but by adding the “feel” component it heightens the awareness. With this focus of feeling the weight balance evenly between both feet, there is the tendency to linger just a heartbeat longer in the rest or stillness. With the mind occupied in feeling, the body does not get antsy to move on.

Another phrase I am using more and more is “flowing back to rest” as we conclude the last movement of a set. This phrase gives a certain *feel* of continuity between moving and stillness or rest.

These two ideas go well together. As we conclude the last repetition of a set I might say “flowing back to rest” (brief pause), “settling downward” (brief pause), “feeling the weight flow evenly into both feet, firm and grounded or rooted and grounded.” Focusing on this thought brings the attention to the soles of the feet, which is great for the flow of energy, and also might help the practitioner settle just a bit longer in the rest by actually having to take the time to feel something specific.

What are your ideas for something new in your teaching this year? Try new words or phrases, new readings from Justin's books, a different way to teach the [four variations of Pully Taffy], beginning or ending class differently, partner work in class. Sometimes new ideas aren't always better, but challenging ourselves as teachers is always a growth experience.

Solo TCC, The Universe, My Dog & I

BY MARYJEAN OWENS, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

Needing a break from too many obligations, appointments, commitments, projects, and classes, I took a break last summer from all these time-eating activities, including group T'ai Chi Chih practice.

Outdoor TCC at the end of the day has always been a lovely escape and refuge for me, especially in the secluded park area where I live. My little eight-pound Maltese, Babette (Snow Leopard Cub Little White Wolf) and I are usually alone there with the late afternoon sun. It's not just a sequestered park, it's our special escape Universe. We walk onto the grass and enter another dimension of feeling, sensing and enlightenment. *Rocking Motion*.

Without the group energy, I depend on myself to remember the movements and count repetitions. Oh, I knew them, but it was so easy to follow our instructor, Lisa, and shadow the group. Relaxed, I often fell prey to daydreaming and floated off while listening to the music. *Daughter on the Mountaintop*.

The sunlight glistens through the leaves of the trees and showers us with shadowy gold specks; the breeze flows through my hair and touches my cheek while little Babette sits quietly nearby, nose still catching end-of-day scents, and I feel my *Chi* flowing into her. She is now a faithful TCC dog. Long shadows surround us. My feet are grounded but I am floating ... I am aware of so many things all at once ... and how do I say this? **I know and feel emotions and feel so full of love that I want to leap and shout and then fall into peaceful joy.** *Push Pull*.



Opera plays in my ear buds. I love doing TCC to the exquisite and majestically beautiful resonances of opera. The passion and intensity of the music lift my heart and hands as the movements flow into one another. I hear Lisa's voice reminding me, "Soft hands," "Back remains straight," "Head/chin up," "Heel touches first." *Pulling Taffy – Perpetual Motion*.

With this solo evening practice, I gently find the TCC that has been eluding me. On my own, TCC becomes Joy Through Movement and the Vital Force I've been hearing and reading about, and I gratefully feel the magic Lisa talks about so often. For my little dog and me, this evening time of day is our beautiful connection to each other and all that is mysterious. For a little while, answers no longer seem so elusive. *Knowledge of the supreme ultimate*.

Summer to autumn. My evening TCC ritual has become a magical transference of dimensions. As the season changes, so must I. The break in all the madness has been healing and enriching. I am back in a group TCC practice and have just begun *Seijaku*. As the sunset moves to an earlier time, my ritual will be adjusted, but I will not give up this solo joy. Sweet and beautiful *Joyous Breath!*

Pyramid Poems

be
at peace
deep within
and practice what
t'ai chi chih
has taught
me
- Bo

calm
mantra
peacefully
present being
a fullness
within
all
- MARC

joy
quiet
letting go
serenity
forgiveness
ho hsi
chweeee
- ERB

close
(but do
not block) your
chi or you will
never feel
complete
joy
- JERRY GRANOK

peace
quiet
affecting
relationship
all is well
the *chi*
speaks
- JENETH RUNDLE

TCC Helped Dramatic Health Turnaround

By VALERIE JENNINGS, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Between undergoing a total hysterectomy as a treatment for cancer in 2011, and suffering severe congestive heart failure in May 2012, I began T'ai Chi Chih classes in February 2012. My doctors were amazed at my eventual recovery, and I credit TCC for the dramatic turnaround.

After the hysterectomy, it was taking me a while to get back on my feet. My sister suggested I try TCC, which she said was like a slow, moving meditation and not a high-impact workout. I was unable to stand, and so sat, through the first few classes with teacher Judy George. Next I got DVDs of Justin Stone and Pam Towne doing TCC and practiced every morning, but found it difficult to follow along. **Creativity was among the things Justin said TCC could improve**, however, so as an artist, I used what I know. Standing in front of a mirror, I did each movement and drew it on paper. Then, being a fabric artist, I created three scarves showing the movements: one for my sister Jeanette, one for Judy (to whom I owe everything), and one for myself. I lay my scarf on the ground in front of me to help remember the movements and direct my feet.

Gradually, my body started getting stronger and my blood pressure was going down. Then in May 2012 I had a relapse in health. My heart was failing and I was admitted to intensive cardiac care for seven days. I experienced atrial flutter, my ventricular rate plunged from 60 to 24, I had no energy, I suffered a fluid overload in my lungs because of a pleural effusion, and my blood pressure increased. I was in congestive heart failure.

By the fifth day in intensive care, the doctors and other caregivers were turning my condition around. They drained 18 liters of fluid from me and I lost 45 pounds. On the sixth day they treated me with cardioversion, an electrical shock to the chest, and my atrial flutter stopped. Next I suffered a second-degree, Type 2 heart block, however, a disruption of electrical signals in the heart. On day seven I had surgery to put in a pacemaker.

When I awoke I felt more energetic than I had in a long time. That evening I was transferred to a heart-monitoring unit and stayed for three days, and during that time my kidneys shut down. Yet in the mornings, **at 6 am when caregivers arrived to draw blood, I did TCC in bed.**

Before I was admitted to the hospital, I was on oxygen and simply went from chair to chair or rode a scooter to get around. After the hospital stay, my energy level was higher but my muscles just were not there. To aid recovery, I attended cardiac rehabilitation for six weeks, three days a week, and two days a week did TCC. After rehab was completed, I resumed practicing TCC every morning.

Now, in mid-September, my doctors are amazed. My atrial flutter has been gone for four weeks and I wear oxygen only when I work out. They say I have to lose more weight to decrease the work of my heart and kidneys; so far I've lost 65 pounds. My energy is up and blood pressure down. My heart rate is 60 and controlled by the pacemaker. I've returned to teaching kids how to compete in American Kennel Club junior competitions and my business has enough orders to keep me busy.

My life has returned and I credit it to TCC, Justin and Judy. Remember the scarves I mentioned making? I received permission to use the TCC registered trademark and now make TCC scarves that Judy designed. They are offered online (taichichih.org/conference_2013/) and we



are donating part of the profits to the 2013 TCC conference in Minnesota. **I've received so much from TCC, including many friends**, and look forward to giving back by helping the conference and someday becoming a TCC teacher.

Today I finished another TCC fabric art piece, but that's another story that will have to wait until maybe next year.

Innumerable Blessings Of TCC

By RICKIE WILSON, PACHECO, CALIFORNIA

As I looked at my “brother” across the table at our favorite coffee shop, I realized how blessed I am and how much T'ai Chi Chih has enriched my life. You see, he's not actually my brother but you would never know that in my family. He has become one of us and must be at family gatherings or my grandchildren ask where “Uncle” Bart is. We met 12 years ago at TCC. Several of my closest friends are those I've met in class. This is just one of many blessings.

several of my closest friends are those I've met in class

I've struggled with high blood pressure all my adult life but have been able to lower it 30 points in 10 minutes, from 150 to 120, just by doing some of my favorite TCC movements.

Another “miracle” of TCC has been the ability to manage pain.

About five years ago I was hospitalized on a Friday with acute pancreatitis, a very serious, often fatal condition. I was told that tiny gallstones were falling through the canal into my pancreas and infecting it. Long story short, the consensus was that I might be hospitalized for a very long time. Another doctor later told me

that most people with this type of illness are often in the hospital for months – but I was home Monday afternoon, exactly three days after admission. I had surgery at 10 p.m. on Sunday and was home walking around 15 hours later, pain free.

Pancreatitis causes unbelievable pain. Although they did give me medication in the hospital, I sincerely believe that prayer and my constant mental TCC were what enabled me to get through the illness and home so quickly. Not only is the physical practice invaluable, the mental practice is also very effective – a wonderful discovery.

Another time I was at the dentist's office for a root canal and he couldn't get my mouth to numb. He gave me more and more medication, but it didn't seem to work. Apparently the adrenaline was fighting the medication and he said he couldn't give me any more shots. I asked him to give me 10 minutes and when he returned about 15 minutes later, my mouth was totally numb. When he asked how I had done that, **I explained I had done an entire TCC practice mentally** and had finally been able to achieve numbness. I never felt a thing through the entire procedure.

I've received so many blessings like these and am living proof that the benefits of TCC are innumerable. The practice has been a wonderful part of my life for 12 years and will be for the rest of my life. I just got off the phone with my friend Judy, who spent Thanksgiving with us. Guess where we met? Absolutely: TCC. We will be getting together again tomorrow as we do each week.

One of the biggest blessings for all of us in the Martinez Kaiser Permanente TCC class is our fantastic instructor, Wendy Helms. She exudes the essence of TCC and exemplifies what the practice is all about. She is well loved by all of us. We should all be steadfast in spreading the word. What a world of peace we would have if everyone were introduced to TCC.



Being

By MICHELE DAPELO, MARYLAND

Perhaps what is sought
is lost already
in the seeking.

Perhaps in embracing
right and left
the hold of right and wrong
is loosened.

Perhaps the path of learning
is found in unknowing
And the path of knowing
is found in unlearning.

Perhaps then, the true no effort
is, simply, in being.

Pyramid Poems

feel
the *chi*
wrinkles tell
the truth you see
now let go
feeling
free
– DIANE MOODY

go
letting
chi flows free
overflowing
habits change
release
free
– MARY R.

joy
insight
laughter tears
growing growing
letting go
blessing
cry
– CYNTHIA WINLAND

the
temple
became light
and healed all with
love and joy
flowing
chi
– MARY WHITE

trust
the *chi*
it will lead
the way to your
awareness
all and
self
– CORINE REEBER

Help Wanted

By STU GOLDMAN, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

T'ai Chi Chih instructors, are you looking to relocate? Retiring from your day job? Want to work on a year 'round tan? Take on a new challenge in an exotic sunny locale! Opportunities for instructors abound in Southeastern Florida. A 300-mile stretch known as the Gold Coast including West Palm Beach, Boca Raton, Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, Miami and the Keys needs you. We have only one instructor listed in the Teacher Directory for this entire coastal span.

Yes, that's correct. Everything Southeast of Orlando, with a population of more than five and a half million people – families, retirement communities, rehab, geriatric and community centers, plus hundreds of yoga and martial arts studios – **this entire region is going without TCC instruction.** Even if citizens of this area were aware and interested, there is no one to serve that interest. The potential prospects are built in.

If you're thinking of relocating to South Florida, where real estate remains at bargain prices and the population is perfect for TCC, here we are. We are waiting for you to impart your energy... please join us! Your presence can make a difference.

Newfoundland Snippets

COMPILED BY SHEILA LEONARD, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

Harriet: Terrified of turbulence when flying. Recently flew overseas from Newfoundland to Europe. Did lots of T'ai Chi Chih mentally and stayed calm all the way as the flight went in and out of turbulence.

Trish: Used TCC mentally to help me sleep better just third week into class and really made a big difference.

Sue: SAD is an issue for me. TCC put me in a good mood with all the fog we had.

Sue: Focusing on deliberately "setting the energy down" at the end of each move makes me feel the energy in my hands right away.

Elizabeth: I need TCC ... has become part of my life ... really miss it if I don't do it ...

Mary: It's a "must" in my life ... energizes me, provides strength for all my joints, especially upper body, makes my body more aware with continuity, keeps me more balanced, body, mind and spirit, if unable to sleep I have practiced gentle moves in my mind and this has provided relaxation and enhanced sleep.

Results Of Regular Practice

By CAROLYN O'DONNELL, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

I have been battling a gum disease for about 20 years. At one point I was expected to lose all my teeth, despite my best efforts. By 2004 it was affecting my jawbones so I underwent extensive dental surgery as a last resort. Since the surgery, each check-up has been marginal but today's was remarkable. My first dental x-rays since January 2011 show a wonderful increase in jawbone density. My periodontist and hygienist were amazed. They told me to keep doing what I've been doing, meaning my dental care. As I left the office I was grinning to myself, wondering when my winter-session T'ai Chi Chih classes start. I'm smiling even more widely today.



Mental Health Prescription

By HENRY SMITH, ROUGH AND READY, CALIFORNIA

I was first introduced to T'ai Chi Chih by my health care provider. My job as a programmer analyst was very demanding with frequent deadlines. I often felt like I was drowning, and developed the physical symptom of not being able to breathe. After I showed up at the emergency room twice, a mental health worker referred me to a TCC class, given at the hospital, for work-related anxiety. **TCC helped me significantly reduce the anxiety.** After retiring we moved to another city. About four years later, I discovered that the people who invented the first floatation tank (aka sensory deprivation tank) live only five miles away and rent their test tank for a small fee. The combination of 90 minutes in the tank once a week and almost daily *Seijaku* has greatly increased my enjoyment of life.

Remembering Justin Through His Books

BY JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The T'ai Chi Chih practice with 150 school kids had just ended. Many of the children ran over to Justin, who was sitting under a tree. They all seemed to have something they wanted to tell him. One fifth grader told Justin he was practicing every day. Another little boy told him proudly that his name was also Justin. A third boy asked, "Why did you call the movement Daughter on the Mountaintop? Why not the son?" Justin looked at him and smiled, then said, "Why do you have five fingers?" The next week he told me what Justin said, wondering why he had said that. I told him that was the true answer to his question. Weeks later he was still pondering this. In a story Justin tells on his CD, *Spiritual Stories of the East*, Roshi gives this same answer to a concerned woman wondering why there are wars

I love listening to these stories and hearing Justin's voice.

When my grandmother died and left me some money, I knew the first thing I wanted to buy was one of Justin's paintings. I really enjoy looking at all the paintings in the book *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin Stone*. I called him to make an appointment to go to his house. After discussing schedules we agreed on a date. Justin said, "I'm writing this down in pencil." Then I realized that would not be a good day for me to leave work early, so I said, "I think I need to change the date." Justin replied, "I've already written it down." That day worked out just fine.

A painting of Justin's in my home office looks to me like a still life. In *Tentatively Forever* there is a still life painting with fruit. The painting I have has a lot of blue in it and my daughter, about five years old at the time, watched me hang it. She very excitedly said, "Oh, I love those magic blue rocks!" I told Justin what she had said and he said, "Those are grapes."

At one of Carmen's retreats, Justin was signing books for people after lunch. Someone had Paul Reps' book, *Zen Telegrams*. Reps and Justin knew each other for a very long time and learned T'ai Chi Ch'uan together in Hawaii. Justin started reading the book to the few people who happened to be sitting around him. He

was smiling as he read "walking between the raindrops" and "now that everybody's in a hurry, let's ride your bicycle through the rice-fields." We all were enjoying this special reading. Justin seemed to be very moved by the writings and said, "This is really good!"

I always looked forward to meditation evenings at Justin's house. When we entered his house, there was always a calm and peaceful feeling. One time I told him I was having a hard time meditating and I thought that maybe sitting meditation just wasn't for me. He looked me in the eyes and said, "Do it every day." That made a world of difference for me. There is a wealth of great insight in *Meditation for Healing: Particular Meditations for Particular Results*, including a section about the dangers of meditation and how to remedy them.

Justin said in *Abandon Hope!*, "The greatest moments of my life have been spent with spiritual figures." I try to practice what my teacher taught me, make time to be with my teacher and to be grateful for our time together.

I was always amazed at how aware Justin was of things going on around him. In *Zen Meditation: A Broad View* he talked about awareness. I remember having "second breakfast" with him and a group of TCC teachers at The Village Inn restaurant. We were all joking about something and Justin stopped, looked across the restaurant and yelled, "Stop that!" We all stopped talking and turned to see what he was talking about. A young mother was roughly pulling on her child's arm, trying to force her to move across the floor. The mother immediately stopped pulling and the child starting obeying. Others remarked what a beautiful child she had. A calming wave seemed to come over everyone.

Students often notice that the teacher's fingers move involuntarily when doing TCC. Justin said this is a confirmatory sign that the energy is flowing. In the *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement Photo Text* he wrote, "This is a favorable sign that the Intrinsic Energy is flowing smoothly ... it means that the practitioner has reached an advanced stage of development."

Justin often talked about finding out who and what you are. In *Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion*, he wrote three different answers to that question. We are so fortunate that Justin was also a writer.

sweet
spirit
justin stone
thank you thank you
t'ai chi chih
gift of
love

— MARY GRIFFITH,
VISTA, CALIFORNIA



Gateway To Eastern Philosophy

BY JUSTIN STONE

~ A STORY: DEATH ~

The Emperor of Japan said to the national Zen Master, "Where will you go when you die?" The Zen Master replied, "I don't know." The Emperor was surprised. He said, "You're a Master, why don't you know?" And the Zen Master replied, "Because I haven't died yet!" Pretty down to earth! It's a good answer and good teaching, too, because it takes away all these preconceptions. If you ask the same question of an Indian teacher, he would probably go on for hours about all the probabilities even though you know he doesn't really know the answer. As a matter of fact, when a friend of mine from Japan, Genjin Suzaki (who taught Indian Buddhism at Otani University in Kyoto), went to India, he told me he came home one night and there was a group of students and a teacher discussing Indian philosophy downstairs. He said "hello" to them, went upstairs, had a night's sleep, got up, took a shower, ate breakfast and came downstairs. They were still talking philosophy! Lengthy discussions are not unusual with Indian culture. Characteristic of Indian philosophy, teachers would give a lot of answers.

Now the same question about death was expressed when a student asked, "**Where will you go when you die?**" The Zen Master said, "Right to Hell." The student was surprised! "Why would you, a Zen Master, go to Hell?" He answered, "If I don't go to Hell, who will be there to teach you?"

~ A STORY: THROW IT OUT! ~

I'm going to tell you one Zen story. It illustrates Zen's feeling of emptiness or Void. Chao Chou, a Chinese man whose name in Japan is "Joshu," was a wonderful teacher! (My teacher, Roshi Sasaki, took his name from Joshu.) Chao Chou started practice at 60, reached Zen enlightenment at 80, and taught to 120. What a remarkable guy!

One of his monks said to him, "If a man comes here carrying nothing, what should I tell him?" Chao Chou said, "Tell him to throw it out!" "Well, if he's not carrying anything, how can he throw it out?" "Ok, then tell him to carry it out."

It's very humorous, but there's deep meaning! The monk is asking, "If a man comes here who's found emptiness and has a *Sunyata* personality, has completely reached that goal, there isn't anything to tell him, is there?" Chao Chou is saying, "I have no

time for such a guy. He's fixated on it! Fine, he's reached it, let him throw it away!" **Zen continually emphasizes that after the enlightenment, after you've succeeded, forget it!** Go back into the world, and make the complete circle. Live as an ordinary person again. So then the monk says, "If he's not bringing anything, he doesn't have anything, how can I tell him to throw it out?" "Tell him to carry it out!"

In other words, it isn't enough to reach the final goal. You've got to block the goal out. Pretty difficult stuff! I love that story because when I tell it, people always laugh. He comes here carrying nothing, what should I tell him, tell him to throw it out! That has deep meaning to it. All the very simple stories in Zen have deep meanings, but you have to realize what they're really talking about.

~ ~ ~

I emphasize that yoga is a science. It is not a religion. It does not matter if you're an atheist or a believer. These practices will bring these results. Practice and experience.



"Implosion," a painting by Justin Stone and courtesy here of a private collection, appears in his lush monograph, "*Tentatively Forever*," available from Good Karma Publishing.

Yoga says, by controlling the breath, mind is controlled. And vice versa. Ramana Maharshi, a great teacher, said the highest form of worship is the repetition of the name of God while the breath is held. Very often I chant the *Gayatri Mantra* (some of you know it):

*Om Bhuh Bhuvah Svah
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
Dyo Yoo Nah Prachodayat.*

We sing it rather than chant it. Ramana Maharshi said that the first four words in the *Gayatri Mantra*, *Om Bhuh Bhuvah Svah*, are the sounds of creation! So, when you're chanting the *Gayatri Mantra* (which is the one mantra in India

that is felt to be for all people of all castes, of all places, at any time), **the first four sounds, according to Ramana Maharshi, are the sounds of creation.**

In regard to yogic practice, remember this truism: these tendencies do not belong to somebody, somebody is the creation of these tendencies. *Your tendencies do not belong to you, you belong to the tendencies.* You are the creation of the tendencies. So, you want to remake yourself? Just change the tendencies!

From the book Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing, and available on www.gkpub.com.

Refinement Questions From Conference

BY HANNAH HEDRICK, FERN FOREST, HAWAII

I spend considerable time encouraging T'ai Chi Chih friends across the country to attend the annual conference or a major workshop each year. My practice is immeasurably improved by the tidbits I pick up, which I try to share with my regular classes and with attendees at sessions in Chicago.

In 2012, I made some minor modifications based on a Chicago-area workshop with Sandy. I now flex my wrists and spread my fingers a little more, and **these slight modifications seem to increase Chi flow.**

I am still working on understanding and possibly incorporating some refinements suggested at the Portland conference. I'm wondering if other participants would benefit from some written guidance related to three issues below.

1. *Trembling hands*: One conference participant made a strong point about the importance of trembling hands during TCC practice. But I find noticeable trembling to be distracting. One of Corinne Codye's* hands wobbled very strongly in Justin's first DVD; the tremor later resolved itself. (*Corinne Codye was the first woman to conduct a teacher accreditation course, in Chicago, due to the unavailability of Steven Ridley, the only teacher accreditor at that time.)

In responses to questions over the years, I recall Justin saying that the hands might tremble. However, he emphasized that we should not consciously create movement in our hands or fingers. I seldom have any movement in my hands beyond a slight "resonation" in my fingers.

At the 2012 conference and in other gatherings, Antonia and the teacher accreditors all reference Justin in almost every teaching tip. Do we have detailed teaching tips from Justin on this issue?

2. *Pronounced sinking and pressing down*: The second issue was raised during a personal conversation. I was asked why I do not make a more pronounced sinking and pressing down with my palms when returning to pause/rest position and why I remain in pause position instead of standing in a more regular stance. I seem to remember that Justin stayed in pause position between movements during group practice at conferences. It feels more grounding to me. I would like to see a discussion of these different ways of coming to and remaining (or not) in "pause/rest" position.

3. *Pelvic movement*: **I greatly appreciate tips at conferences and trainings that help me refine and get more benefits from my practice.** At the 2012 conference, Antonia and the three accreditors all emphasized and repeatedly demonstrated allowing the pelvis to move naturally forward and backward from the neutral position when *yinning* and *yanging*. The refinement for me means allowing my tush to flow slightly back after the weight shift to the back leg is completed. This movement causes the toe of the front foot to release without any conscious leg movement. I used to do a slight pelvic tilt when in the forward *yang* and then maintain a neutral pelvis in the backward *yang* position.



I feel that I finally understand what Justin was trying to show us through the years, but then, I've thought I understood a subtlety before

I hesitated to raise these issues at conference because I don't want to appear divisive in any way. But I feel we would all benefit from clarifications about what appear to be some minor yet significant differences in understanding and in movement. I would love to hear (in *The Vital Force*) from my fellow teachers as well.

Pyramid Poems INSPIRED DURING THE CONFERENCE, BY DEBBIE COLE

chi
dancing
balancing
from tip of toes
heart fire knows
you are
here

here
in space
with a trace
of dancing chi
melting hearts
complete
me

who
am i
without chi
disconnected
time to ground
my soul
more

mind
aware
memories
in the moment
remember
present
thought

life
is now
presently
in the moment
allowing
movement
still

Teaching Strategies: A Discussion

BY LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

At the 2011 T'ai Chi Chih conference, we held roundtable discussions to talk with each other about effective teaching strategies. We began by each reviewing our own classes. This included considering how we teach; use time; welcome, motivate and engage students; plan for new and continuing students; and evaluate our classes.

Teachers asked themselves: "What are my major concerns in teaching TCC? What do I need to know more about to be a better teacher? What problems am I experiencing in class?" Those not currently teaching asked themselves: "What do I need to know so I can start teaching? What is keeping me from starting a class?"

Next, we paired up and spent time talking with another teacher about how our classes were going and what was not going so well. We wrote questions about teaching on file cards and then shared ideas and strategies with the larger group.

Eight strategies were selected for discussion. They came from brain research and best practices used in educational settings worldwide.

- 1) Adequate classroom environment (heat, light, ventilation, chairs, accessibility, room size, sound system, bathrooms, parking, etc.)
- 2) Direct instruction (show and tell, review and rehearse)
- 3) Guided group practice (teacher leads and teaches as students move as a group)
- 4) Partner practice (an integral part of TCC class at all levels)
- 5) Think-alouds (modeled by teacher to reveal inner awareness processes)
- 6) Stimulating higher-level thinking skills (teacher asking "why" questions; students responding with answers)
- 7) Correction (use of positive feedback to everyone and modeling the correct way to perform a movement)
- 8) Auditory/visual support (use of music, handouts, charts, signs, books, technology)

Topics teachers raised included:

- How to handle disruptive students or students who arrive late or talk too much in class.
- How to meet all the students' needs in an ongoing class with new students joining each week.
- How to teach a class in which some students have learned all the moves and some just half.

- How to teach a drop-in class for all levels of students, and teach the entire form over time.
- How to challenge long-time students and still meet new students' needs.
- How to cover everything in one hour.
- How to engage students and make the class more interesting.
- How to engage those who don't follow directions or don't make adjustments in their form.
- How to get health info on students without being intrusive.
- Benefits and drawbacks of teaching in a classroom with a mirror.
- The best use of Justin's TCC DVD in class.
- How to handle a couple in class in which one partner does not want to learn TCC.
- Whether to use mirror image or all face the same way when leading TCC group movements.

We discovered that many challenges in TCC classes can easily be solved by using the eight strategies. These include issues of discipline, correction and handling diverse groups of people. In fact, students will blossom, become more engaged in their own learning and more supportive of others. Our classes will grow larger when our teaching is inclusive, positive and interactive. As teachers, we can empower students to be self-motivated to seek improved skills and deeper understanding.

Many supportive ideas were shared at the conference and **teachers expressed a strong desire to have an ongoing dialogue about teaching strategies at future TCC conferences.**

Where to Begin

TCC teachers who want to evaluate and improve their classes can start with a few key steps, including:

- Use the eight strategies to evaluate your teaching and see which ones might offer ways for you to improve.
 - Visit another TCC class and observe how that teacher teaches. Then provide feedback on the eight strategies if he or she requests feedback after class. Be supportive. Consider becoming a mentor for another teacher and discussing how he or she might improve.
 - Continue to evaluate yourself after every TCC class by asking:
 - Did I meet every student's needs in this class?
 - Are students making the same mistakes they made last year or are they progressing?
 - Are students getting more actively involved in their learning each time they come to class?
 - Is my class student-centered, interesting and challenging?
 - Is my class socially interactive and experiential, rather than lecture-style?
 - Are my students becoming independent, self-motivated and passionate about TCC?
 - Are they doing TCC independently now?



A Meeting Of Cultures

By MAUREEN PURVES, ALBERTA

On a winter weekend in the 1980s, I was teaching a T'ai Chi Chih course to a group of Caucasians in a beautiful setting, a recreation center in Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River valley. As we practiced our TCC moves, glass walls on two sides of the room afforded clear views of the outdoors. It was a bright sunny day with snowdrifts everywhere and large snowflakes sprinkling down.

In the midst of all the snow and quiet, a Chinese family was observing us. They were bundled up in colourful snowsuits and scarves, walking on snowshoes. Through the glass, we were experiencing and enjoying each other's cultures.



There Softness Begins

By MATTHEW VAN DER GIESSEN, ALBERTA

I had positioned myself toward the end of a long row of workshop participants when Justin Stone walked into the room and sat himself down right in front of me. My placement of safe anonymity evaporated immediately. Justin sat there, looking at nothing and everything, while we moved through our set of TCC movements.

Earlier that week I had arrived in Albuquerque with teachers and students from across the continent who had gathered to celebrate Justin's 94th birthday, and to take my first Intensive workshop.

When we finished, Pam Towne, who led the intensive, asked Justin for his comments. The many useful things I'm sure he said disappeared in a blur for me when, at one point, **he turned to me and said, "I don't know what you think you are doing, but that's not T'ai Chi Chih."** I had been warned by Gail Terriff, my teacher in Edmonton, that when I attended the Intensive I would receive at least one correction that would collapse my sense that I knew how to practice TCC. Little did I know that it would come as such a sweeping critique of my practice and from Justin Stone himself. I continued to absorb the impact of Justin's statement as Pam led us into the next section of practice.

Then, a window opened, awakening me from my self-absorbed reflection. Justin had become a bit antsy as he waited for Carmen Brocklehurst to take him home; he was hosting a meditation later that afternoon. Finally, he got up and headed for the door. I waited for somebody to do something but it seemed in that moment as if time stopped and nobody moved. I felt myself step forward and open the door for Justin.

As I walked him out to the car, he turned to me with the second set of words he would ever speak to me. **"Your technique is just fine," he said. "You just have to learn to relax."** It was if, after I fell into a pit as the ground opened under my feet when he spoke to me earlier, he now handed me a ladder by which I might be able to find my way out.

Later that week, among the many invaluable things I learned, Pam handed me an essential rung for my new ladder. It was comprised of the basic principles of TCC practice: moving from the center with softness and continuity, *yiming* and *yanging* with the focus on the soles of my feet, with polarity and circularity. Somehow I thought I could never memorize this simple line. Yet I immediately recognized that this was the missing piece I needed to respond to Justin's challenge. Every evening after our class I practiced it in my hotel room. Eventually it stuck.

In my work as a massage therapist, I interact with people through my body every day. After 30 years I have learned that congruent interaction is an essential part of my practice. **TCC powerfully changed the quality of my work;** new options opened up with deep and unexpected shifts for my clients. In the years since meeting Justin, my work has gone through perhaps the most significant evolution of my whole career.

And perhaps as important, I find that in every day interactions with others, whether individuals or groups, my internal mantra helps keep me grounded, helps me hear how I need to be in this moment. I feel more comfortable in myself and, perhaps, more helpful to the fellow beings who inhabit my particular universe. While Justin may no longer be with us in person, his words are there in my ear to help guide me through the rest of my life, moving from the center with softness and continuity.

*Justin's words
help guide me
through the
rest of my life*

Teaching Students With Mental Health Issues

By GAIL TERRIFF, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

For the last few years, I have taught T'ai Chi Chih classes to people with mental health issues at four locations in Edmonton. Sharing TCC with them can be a challenge; it also gives me great joy. I must remain flexible and positive, and the *Chi* provides the tools I need, including the calm and patience to teach people with special needs. It allows me to see the smallest miracles and wonders in each and every person.

The original group, which started many years ago, is comprised of clients from the Alberta Hospital, which provides psychiatric care. This group travels from the hospital to a recreation center in our beautiful river valley. I usually see them one day a week, two weeks in a row, two to four times a year. The 10 to 25 participants range in age from their teens to elderly; a few hospital staff members also attend the hour-long sessions. Some people have come to class before and others have never done TCC. With all of these variables, teaching can be challenging. I provide a short explanation of TCC at the beginning but use more of a hands-on approach, as participants are eager to begin. Instead, I teach the basics as we go through the movements.

They learn by following me and I encourage questions. At the beginning, there is a lot of unsettled movement and some people have short attention spans. I continue slowly and with intention, staying calm and making general observations and corrections. My biggest reward is seeing the scene of unsettledness, agitation and talking become a room full of people moving together and in the flow of the *Chi*. About 15 minutes into the hour, **there's a quiet and unity of spirit**. At the end of the session, when I see the calm and content faces in front of me, I sense participants have truly experienced the *Chi* flowing and it's **giving them a sense of peace and well-being**. Staff members say they notice the changes as well.

Another group, Community Linking at Villa Marguerite, includes 10 to 15 people, men and women of all age groups, most of whom live at the Villa or in the community with support. A few come from the local Misericordia Community Hospital Psychiatric Unit. Staff members also attend. The TCC classes are among several day programs scheduled throughout the year to introduce people to different community activities, such as yoga, crafts and walking. Members of this group are more able than those in the first group to learn TCC movements and remember them from session to session. In these classes there's also an unsettledness in the beginning, but the *Chi* quickly calms everyone. After Cosmic Consciousness Pose, I see content smiles around the room.

I also share TCC each Thursday morning at a daylong drop-in program for people with mental health issues. They are from all age groups and live nearby, and I never know who will show up. Attendance usually is low and during the single hour of TCC, attendance can change with new people arriving and others leaving. I dim the lights, turn on calming music, and lead a TCC practice with a poster showing the movements and the Six Healing Sounds. Again I see the flow and circulation of the *Chi* in and around us.

For a six-week period, two to three times a year, I teach another program at the downtown Don Wheaton YMCA to a young, vibrant group of teens and young adults who are in school and have milder mental health issues. They want to know more and can participate to a greater degree. They love certain movements and the calming music. At the end of every class, **I see young people feeling good about themselves and happy**.

Some also practice TCC at home; many say it makes them feel good. An evaluation conducted by the group's recreation therapist last April/May 2012 underscored these reports. (See chart.)

I believe that anyone who includes TCC in his or her life will feel better, cope with daily stresses more effectively, and feel more confident and whole. TCC is respectful – it teaches us to respect both ourselves and others. With words not nearly enough but with great gratitude and love, I deeply thank Justin Stone for being the channel through which TCC came to be.

YMCA Group Evaluations

Participants evaluated their experience of the TCC classes on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful) for the following questions:

- 1) Have you increased your knowledge and skills in T'ai Chi Chih? (average: 4.8)
- 2) Has your motivation increased to participate and understand TCC? (average: 3.8)
- 3) Has your fitness level improved by participating in TCC? (average: 3.6)
- 4) Has your weight been better managed by participating in the group exercise program? (average: 3.4)
- 5) Do you use the TCC program to help you deal with stress? (average: 3.8)
- 6) Has your ability to have fun in a new healthy activity increased? (average: 4.4)
- 7) Have you increased your social connection with others in a meaningful way? (average: 4.2)

Smiles & Warm Greetings

By JACKSON RAINS, PLYMOUTH, MINNESOTA

As a new teacher I have had the good fortune to be asked to take on both classes for beginners and a few advanced classes in which the students have been together for many

years. This blend of new and seasoned students has been a wonderful experience. It has given me the opportunity to hear about, and see, the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih for both beginning and experienced students.

For new students, TCC is mainly a physical activity because they are distracted, having to concentrate on how they are moving as they learn. Benefits are mainly physical, such

as improved balance and flowing from the center. Over time the movements become committed to muscle memory and the students are able to deepen their experience of TCC as a moving meditation. Through being focused internally, in the present moment, students share that they are able to let go of the busy-ness of life and relax in a profound way. Instead of experiencing energy as nervous and scattered, the energy stimulated through TCC becomes empowering and focused.

A student came up to me after a class with a big smile on her face and said, "Today is the one year anniversary of being in this class, and TCC has changed my life!" I had watched her blossom as a student and already knew that TCC had made a difference for her. She has a physical condition that is marked by generalized pain in the body. **TCC benefited her physically as well as emotionally and socially.** In just two years as a teacher, I have had several students make similar comments.

Social aspects of TCC classes grow more important over time, and are often overlooked when we talk about benefits. As a class that has been together for years gathers, there are lots of smiles and warm greetings. There is an energetic buzz in the room as students catch up with each other. Beginning the practice sometimes feels like an interruption, but it is, of course, why we have come together. As teachers we need to remember that Justin's direction to focus on moving, rather than on talking about moving, is about our teaching. Time spent by students connecting with one another is not mere "talk," but provides **the significant benefit of connection to something bigger than ourselves.**

Joseph Campbell told Bill Moyers that he does not know how anyone gets through life without an "invisible means of support." Many (sometimes I believe most) of our new students come to class without any knowledge of meditation, much less the moving meditation that is TCC. The practice is spiritual, but not religious, and does not prescribe any particular path. Experiencing the mental focus and moving meditation of the practice and sitting quietly afterwards, however, allows an individual to follow his or her own path by encouraging the exploration and experience of "Other," whatever that is for them. My experience of long-time TCC students and teachers is that they are very spiritual people who have a strong "invisible means of support."

For me, the benefits of TCC were immediate and profound. From learning the first halting movements, I felt that I had found the home I had been seeking for a long time. And I love sharing that possibility with my students.

Pyramid Poems

INSPIRED DURING THE CONFERENCE,
BY DEBBIE COLE

peace
in heart
learning smart
more letting go
now i grow
right here
now

joy
deeply
feeling it
experience
teaches me
letting
go

peace
breathe in
love breathe out
community
quietly
making
peace

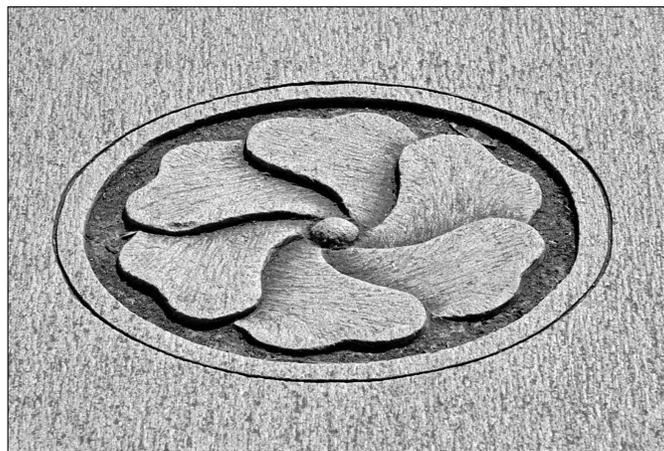
ear
can hear
listening
comes from the heart
allowing
deeply
heard

be
here now
in moment
growing softer
in the soul
that's the
goal

Light

By CAROL SPICER,
FAIR LAWN, NEW JERSEY

During the recent Northeast storm and power outage, T'ai Chi Chih by candlelight warmed me up; picturing the steady center of the flame as love/our true self, and the surrounding hot flickering colors, melting other thoughts away.



TCC & Seijaku Workshops with Pam Towne, October 2012, Newfoundland, Canada

BY HOST, SHEILA LEONARD, NEWFOUNDLAND

After much dreaming, the time was finally right in October of last year for Pam to come to Newfoundland for these workshops. She arrived early to allow time to enjoy some of the local sights and sounds, which proved a real delight. Although Hurricane Sandy cut short the anticipated extra days after the weekend, the days in between were a delight unto themselves as we opened ourselves to the gift of those days with Pam, exploring and deepening our T'ai Chi Chih/*Seijaku* practice. We were invited to enter into the weekend "with an empty cup" and it was indeed filled to overflowing.



"Got what I needed, beyond expectations," "recommitment to more regular practice," "feeling of expansion," "so opened like bottled energy expanding so you do indeed have time," "some confusion being lifted," "softness I've never experienced before," "no physical remnants of physical stress I usually feel," "wanted a renewal of interest in Seijaku and it happened," "gained a better understanding," "TCC and the *Chi* itself becoming more like constant companions amidst life challenges and delights, there for you like a friend," "need to savour the meditation experience and do more of it" – these are snippets of reflections participants shared as the weekend drew to a close. Spending the concentrated time was key for all.

The Joy part of the TCC energy was very strong. All were amazed, including Pam, at how far we came in so short a time. Some giant leaps indeed! The invitation we heard at the closing was to simply allow the experience of the weekend to continue to unfold, reminiscent of Pam's wonderful image of dipping a cloth repeatedly in dye so that the colors gradually become richer, deeper, fuller and more interesting.



Retreat

with Pam Towne, October 2012, Prescott, Arizona

BY DANA DILLER, PRESCOTT VALLEY, ARIZONA

The second annual fall retreat included participants from 10 states as far away as Florida, California, South Dakota and New York. Attendees included both teachers and students. Teachers included some newly accredited and others with many years of experience. Students needed to know only the first 10 T'ai Chi Chih movements to attend. Under Pam's gentle guidance, "Deepening Your TCC Practice" was the event theme. Twice-daily practices and meditations in a serene setting led us to improve our practice.

Chapel Rock, a retreat center and church camp in Prescott for more than 90 years, is set along the banks of Aspen Creek in our Ponderosa Pine-forested mountains. Prescott, the former territorial capital, is a beautiful

small city in the mountains of Arizona. In September, we usually have clear skies, warm days and cool nights.

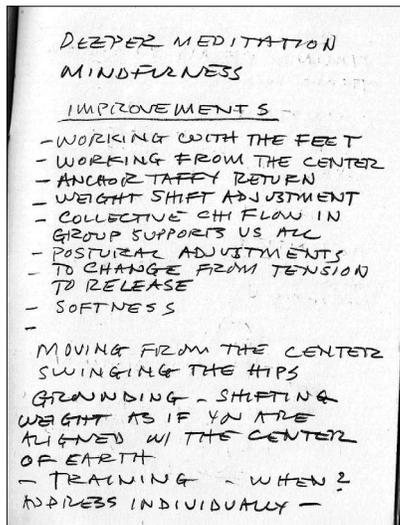
The retreat was transformational and my practices were deeper than ever before. **I had never felt so much *Chi* flowing.** Peace and joy infused each time I practiced and I brought this experience home after the retreat. Another local student said he had similar experiences and they persisted for some time. The greatest change for me has been a deeper understanding of the relationship between softness and continuity. With the deepening of my practice thanks to the retreat, I'm feeling greater softness than ever before. With a reduction of tension, I find that neither softness nor continuity can happen without the other. Justin truly had vision to teach them together. I now see that they are tied together as complementary parts of one of the basic principles of TCC.

The Nei Kung

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is taken from Justin Stone's Meditation for Healing, where you will find much more information about this powerful meditation. The book is available from Good Karma Publishing at gkpub.com.

Nei Kung ... "literally means 'inner efficiency,' and the reason for this title will be easily discerned when one has practiced it a few times. Generally, the practitioner will fall asleep while repeating the mental affirmations. He or she may awaken during the night with a strong heat flowing through him, and that heat has great healing qualities. Wherever the heat is felt, there is said to be blockage.

As the Chi energy flows through the body from just below the waist down to the soles of the feet (the so-called "bubbling spring"), it passes through the meridian channels which are the basis of Chinese acupuncture. Effects are strong and surprising to the beginner."



INSTRUCTION

"Lying on your back in bed, with eyes closed and the room light turned off, press your legs together and begin to mentally repeat the following four affirmations, over and over, until sleep intervenes:

This Energy Sea, this *tan t'ien*, from below the navel to the soles of the feet, full of my Original Face; where are the nostrils on that face?

This Energy Sea, this *tan t'ien*, from below the navel to the soles of the feet, full of my True Home; what need of a message from that home?

This Energy Sea, this *tan t'ien*, from below the navel to the soles of the feet, full of the Pure Land of Consciousness only; what need of outer pomp for this Pure Land?"

Pyramid Poems

feel
the *chi*
flowing down
to the legs to
the soles of
the feet
sleep
- JUDY

night-
time's friend
soothing sounds
chi lullaby
bringing me
healing
sleep
- SHERYL ADAIR

the
orbit
tan t'ien to
the soles of the
feet brings me
healing
now
- JERRY GRANOK

sleep
comes fast
resting in
the flowing *chi*
energy
moves free
ground
- MARY R.

dawn
sleepy
silent kin
start a new day
not a sound
to be
heard
- DEBRA WINLAND

sleep
dreamless
restoring
goodness of life
morning light
giving
hope
- CYNTHIA WINLAND

voice
i hear
guiding me
toward the lightness
the center
the truth
chi
- JENETH RUNDLE (TRIPTYCH)

chi
request
embrace me
turn me into
an ember
kindled
free
- JENETH RUNDLE (TRIPTYCH)

self
whispers
on the wings
of the nei kung
emerging
merging
whole
- JENETH RUNDLE (TRIPTYCH)

thoughts
constant
restless mind
sleep elusive
solution
nei kung
fix
- J. KIEFER VEERKAMP

sleep
and rest
quiet still
rejuvenate
release and
let go
rise
- PAULINE QUIMSON

years
ago
justin taught
me the nei kung
i could not
finish
zzzz
- BROCK

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Music for T'ai Chi Chih Practice & Restful Listening

Original compositions and performance by Justin F. Stone

Compact disk \$11.95

Pub Date: 15 February 2013

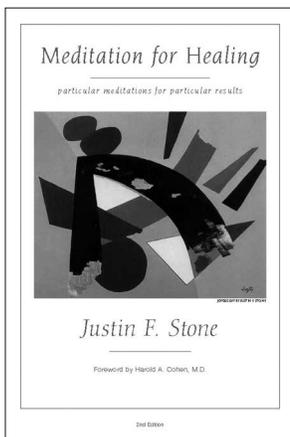


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Original compositions and performance by Justin F. Stone

Compact disk \$11.95

Pub Date: 15 February 2013

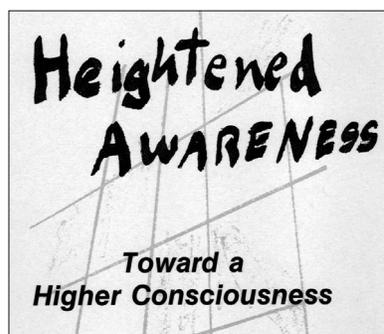


Meditation for Healing: Particular Mediations for Particular Results

(2nd edition)

E-book Available: 15 March; \$9.99

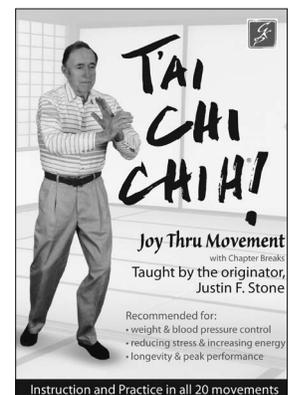
Print Pub Date: financial
feasibility to be determined.



Heightened Awareness

(2nd Edition)

E-book Available: 15 March; \$9.99



T'ai Chi Chih – Solo DVD with Justin Stone

now with chapter breaks

Pub Date: 15 February 2013

When I teach Six Healing Sounds, I usually teach the sounds first – before I add the arm and leg movements. “Ho,” I said, like ... Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas. “Hu,” I said, like ... Who did it? “Szu,” I said, like ... the name Sue, and you sneezed. “Hsu,” I said, like ... Shhhh, don’t make a sound, or rhymes with Chih. When I got to “Hsi,” I was all prepared to say like ... She did it, but a student interrupted me and said, “I know, like ... sushi.”
 – SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

The LivingWell Cancer Resource Center fell into my lap. Or I fell into theirs. Which came first? No matter. Volunteering is a gift. After class, peace and joy. Who is the teacher? Who is the student? We share the label. Receiving/Giving Giving/Receiving Yin/Yang
 – TERRY SLANEY, GENEVA, ILLINOIS

Penny told a tale of arriving in Florida to visit friends and exclaiming “Oh, no!” to her hosts, who then asked, “Did you forget your pills? Your bathing suit?” “No,” she responded frustratingly, “I forgot my TCC DVD.”
 Penny also mentioned that her friends fall asleep while watching her practice, sometimes awakening briefly and drifting off again. They find it so relaxing.



Pyramid Poems

why
 silence
 quiet mind
 relaxation
 ideas
 action
 yes
 –MAGGIE BREIMSHURST

look
 gently
 T'ai Chi Chih
 powerfully
 joyously
 smiling
 glide
 – BARBARA DINEHART

soft
 silence
 flowing *Chi*
 fills me with joy
 joy filled life
 smiling
 be
 – RICH ASHMAN

come
 come closer
 come over
 now! overcome
 retreat not
 boldly
 now
 – JENETH RUNDLE

crane
 silent
 motionless
 still sentinel
 wings lift: flight
 clear light
 free
 – MARY RUIZ

peace
 silence
 joyfully
 consciousness is
 smiling soul
 moving
 joy
 – BARBIE FORTUNE

flow
 moving
 silently
 circling washing
 like water
 over
 Stone
 – LINDA MINOR

eyes
 soft now
 look. you point
 you are light
 in silence
 blessed
 see
 – JENETH RUNDLE

be
 in the
 moment of
 serenity
 focus on
 being
 still
 –ROBERT MONTES DE OCA

calm
 stillness
 will bring you
 warm and thoughtful
 responses
 for each
 need
 – BO, ATLANTA



Conference 2012

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Community Calendar

(For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, visit www.taichichih.org)

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
Feb 26-Mar 1	Retreat with Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA	Pam Towne / 760-722-9544
March 5-8	Retreat with Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA	Pam Towne / 760-722-9544
April 26-27	Retreat with Dan Pienciak	Portland, OR	Jim Shorr / 503-481-8211 / jshorr@wealtheeducation.com
May 7-12	Teacher Accreditation with Sandy	Aston, PA	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573
May 8-12	TCC Intensive with Pam	Prescott, AZ	Hope Spangler / 928-775-2010
Aug 1-4	TCC Teacher Conference	near Minneapolis, MN	www.taichichih.org
Aug 4-6	Seijaku Teacher Accreditation	near Minneapolis, MN	www.taichichih.org
Aug 5-6	Seijaku Heightened Awareness Class	near Minneapolis, MN	www.taichichih.org
Sep 25-29	TCC Retreat with Antonia	Pecos, NM	Ann Rutherford / 505-292-5114
Oct 17-20	Prajna Retreat	Aston, PA	April Lefler / 610-532-6753

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

Apr 11-14 / **TCC Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst** / Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

June 8 / **Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst** / Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

Sept 19-22 / **TCC Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst** / Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810



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

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

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

Name of "second signature" _____

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