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Subject: Sandy's April 2017 T'ai Chi Chih Newsletter
Date: April 1, 2017 at 3:02 AM
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Sandy's Message:

[What!? Heavy Elbows?](#)

The San Francisco Bay Area teachers hold a one-day workshop the second Saturday in March for teachers and students. Sometime we have one person such as Sr. Antonia, Dan Pieniac, or myself lead the day. Other times we have had several local teachers take segments of the day and present. It makes for a rich day of diversity with many voices sharing their knowledge and experience.

...and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

The week following the workshop, in my various T'ai Chi Chih classes, I enjoy having my students who attended share with their classmates what they took away from the day. There is always some gem. And now I would like to share with you what gems I picked up at that one-day workshop.

Heavy elbows! Yes, heavy elbows. There are several moves where this concept can be of benefit. Consider Push Pull – after you get the hands in place to begin the movement take just a second to think heavy elbows and see if the shoulders drop. For Pulling in the Energy and Around the Platter think heavy elbows just as you start and also again when the arms are returning and are coming near to the chest.

Let's apply thinking heavy elbows with Working the Pulley. As we start out both elbows are low and near the body. As we shift the weight forward, the front arm extends with an awareness of keeping the elbow low. This keeps the shoulder joint from fully opening and also keeps the arm from reaching to far forward which could cause leaning. Now apply thinking heavy elbows for the arm that goes back – keep that elbow low and allow that forearm to extend open from the elbow joint. The hand rounds up to shoulder height with movement from the lower arm and hand only. Little to no movement of the upper arm (between the elbow and shoulder) is necessary. As I do the movement I feel the elbows moving forward and back but with only a slight rising.

One other gem I picked up at the workshop is a great teaching tool. Stand behind a chair with about 8 inches between you and the back of the chair. Do Bird Flaps its Wings and as you sink and rise notice if the distance between your Tan Tien and the chair changes. As we sink in the movement we are actually rolling our weight forward onto the balls of the feet, not just sinking downward. If done correctly we will notice we are moving closer to the back of the chair as we sink and then moving away from the back of the chair as we rise. It is the rolling of our weight forward onto the balls of the feet that allows the heels to peel off the floor without having to use muscular effort to lift them.

I find not only do teachers of long standing have valuable experience to share but new teachers also are inventive and fresh with the way they explain and teach. Consider creating ways in your T'ai Chi Chih Teaching community to share and explain how you teach the movements. Plan a day workshop for teachers and students, a 1/2 day workshop followed by a potluck, a casual teachers get-together where teachers take turns sharing teaching tips. Be creative in providing an enriching experience for your T'ai Chi Chih Community.

Let your gems sparkle and shine!

*Sandy McAlister
Hayward, CA*

PS Don't forget the last Sunday of April, the 29th, is World T'ai Chi and Qigong. By doing T'ai Chi Chih at 10 am in your time zone that day, you are contributing to the positive vibe being created around the world. Plan a gathering in a park or open space and let T'ai Chi Chih be enjoyed by those watching and encourage them to join in. Add

your joy and peace to the web of others who are striving to bring serenity to a chaotic world.

[Click here to read past issues of the Guide's newsletters](#)



Update: 2017 Teacher Conference

[Report from the Conference Committee:](#)

It is very exciting to see the growing list of teachers coming to the conference. We love that the conference gives us an opportunity to connect with old friends and to meet new ones. If you have not done so already, check out the "[Look Who's Coming to the Conference](#)" link for a list of teachers who have already registered. If your name is not on the "Look Who's Coming" list, we hope to see your name there soon!

**And, whether you are coming to the conference or not, please check out our Conference Shirts. Anyone can order them*, whether you are able to be at the conference or not. You can just call the order number and let them know you want home delivery. The logo on the shirts beautifully expresses our eternal journey with the Chi. And there are lots of options to choose from. The options include both men's and women's casual shirts and men's and women's professional shirts. Both styles come in multiple colors. Your order must be received by May 15th. [Check them out now.](#)*

Important note: *Our original block of 50 rooms at a discounted rate are almost filled up. We were able to negotiate an additional 10 rooms at the same discounted rate. After these 60 rooms are filled, the next block of rooms will likely be at a higher rate. If you want a discounted room it is important to get your reservation at the Millennium Harvest House in as soon as possible. We also have Caroline Guilott available to help you find a roommate if you want to lower your expense.*

[Conference Programming Highlights](#)

We are very excited about the conference program this year. Program speakers and presentations are still being confirmed. Here's a taste of what is being planned so you can get excited too! Please stay tuned--when complete, the full program (including meal and break times) will be posted on taichichih.org

[Friday Highlights](#)

Friday's focus is "Feel the Chi." This day is dedicated to your own growth, focusing on your practice, and deepening your relationship with the Chi.

The Science of Well Being: The Brain on T'ai Chi Chih

(David Parrish)

"What are you Feeling Now?": Four Perspectives on Grounding

(Dan Pienciak, Pam Towne, Carmen Brocklehurst, and Marie Dotts)

Movement Refinement by our wonderful guide Sandy McAlister

Group Discussion: Staying Curious About Our Practice (Giving and Receiving Correction with Humility and Teh)

Feeling the Chi in your Own Practice

(Caroline Guilott, Dora Derzon, and Amy Tyksinski)

TCC Storytelling and Talent Show // Chi Party

Saturday Highlights

Saturday's focus is "Share the Chi." This day is dedicated to supporting your teaching and spreading the word of T'ai Chi Chih.

Presentation: Promoting T'ai Chi Chih by Jessica Lewis

Lunchtime networking affinity groups for teaching specific

populations/settings: (children; teens & college students; prisoners; in senior centers; at fitness

centers/gyms; teaching people with physical limitations; patient support groups; grief support groups; caregivers' support groups)

Small group discussion: The Physical and the Spiritual in T'ai Chi Chih

Breakout sessions: How to Introduce and Refine Basic Principles and Movements (choose two sessions to attend)

- Teaching alignment and forward and back weight shift from the Tan T'ien
- Side-to-side movements: the hip swivel & moving from the Tan T'ien
- Teaching Joyous Breath as an introduction to Seijaku; and teaching Six Healing Sounds
- Demystifying teaching the Taffys
- Discussion: Teaching ongoing, drop-in classes
- Teaching seated T'ai Chi Chih to all students whether or not they need to sit

We are looking forward to seeing you all in June!

Your 2017 Teacher Conference Committee

Conference Coordinator: Marie Dotts mcdotts@hotmail.com

Venue and Hospitality: Lisa VV tccbuckinghorse@yahoo.com

Registration and Scholarship: Leya Cragin l.cragin@comcast.net

Program and Outreach: Lisa Otero lisa.otero@post.harvard.edu



2017 Folsom State Prison Banquet and Circles of Light Event

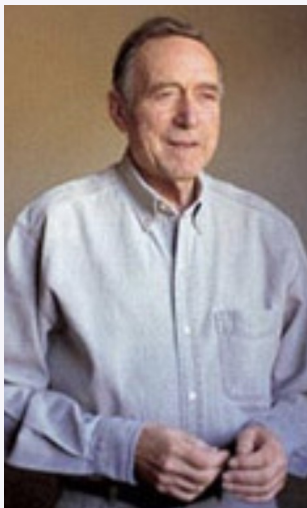
On Tuesday, April 25th, 2017, the T'ai Chi Chih class at Folsom State Prison will hold its 5th Annual Banquet & CIRCLES OF LIGHT event.

Every year on the day of our banquet the Folsom class invites individuals and groups from all over the world to participate by joining us in a global, synchronized T'ai Chi Chih practice. I am excited to announce that I have finally gained permission to have photos taken at the banquet this year, which I will share in my next article for the Vital Force.

Please join in our synchronized practice, which will begin at precisely 1:45 p.m., Pacific Daylight Savings time, with Sandy McAlister attending again this year.

You can also support the class by sending donations to help pay for the food, as the banquet is funded entirely by private donors. These donations also help to buy textbooks and other supplies for the class. Your participation means a great deal to the men in the Folsom class, as it helps them feel supported and connected to the greater T'ai Chi Chih community. They are appreciative beyond words.

Make checks payable to Julie Heryet, and send to P.O. Box 1151, El Dorado, CA 95623 THANK YOU!



Justin's Insights

Softly and Without Effort

Though great strength is involved it paradoxical that T'ai Chi Chih must be done softly and without effort. Teachers continually harp on the softness and continuity. If there's tension the Chi will not flow freely through the meridian channels, which will contract. So, there must be an effortless effort. If one imagines he is swimming through very heavy air, or that he is moving slow motion in a dream, he or she will get the idea. It is actually more important to know how to move than to know what moves to make.

From the Justin Stone Speaks CD
Good Karma Publishing, Inc.

Chi Reflections

The Law of Least Effort

This law is based on the fact that nature functions with effortless ease. This is the principle of least action, of no resistance.

principle of least action, or no resistance.

This, therefore, the principle of harmony and love. This principle is known as the principle of economy of effort, or "do less and accomplish more."

Least effort is expended when your actions are motivated by love.

~ Deepak Chopra

Grace, Play & Effortless Effort

*I have noticed recently that new students unfold in three stages. **The first stage** is just learning the movements and acquainting the body in the principles of how to move. What helps a student the most at this stage is a lot of repetition. The turning point is when a student no longer has to think about a movement. The body just knows it.*

*... **The second stage** for new students seems to be a call to ground and deepen into their weight shifts. The Chi calls them to bring more presence and awareness to their lower body. It is time to explore and play with their weight shifts. Are they shifting their weight fully, softly and gradually from one foot to the other? Are they in alignment moving from the center of their body? Are they allowing the waist to turn in the side-to-side movements? ... [They] feel and live in their feet in ways they may never have before.*

***The third stage** is all about letting go and allowing the Chi to move you. With the deepening into their weight shifts, students now have a greater capacity to be present and surrender to the loving movement within them. This sounds easy but to the ego it can feel like you are jumping off a cliff to your death.*

The practice is asking us to let go of a lifelong habit of keeping safe by controlling life. The students need to drop out of the false safety of their minds and drop into inner stillness, their true safety. It is only in stillness that we can feel and surrender to the movement of the Chi within us. The Chi is now calling students to trust their bodies and trust what they feel. It is the moment-to-moment presence in their weight shifts that helps give them the inner strength needed to take the next leap.

*... _ **The end of stage three is really the beginning of our journey:** A journey where the Chi is our true teacher. We now have a much greater trust in ourselves, and the flow of the Chi within us. Outer teachers do not go away. The Chi will use and bring them into our lives to help us receive a particular lesson it wants for us. The gifts of these lessons are always greater love, joy and capacity to receive the fullness and goodness of life._*

~ Marie Dotts [Read full text of Marie's article here](#)



T'ai Chi Chih Events led by the Guide and Teacher Trainers

2017 Events

April 1-7, 2017 Aston, PA Teacher Training with Sandy McAlister

Contact: April Leffler lirpaleff@rcn.com

April 20-23 Rochester, MN TCC Retreat with Pam Towne

Contact: Judy Trousell jtrous1a@charter.net

April 29, 2017 Bordentown, NJ World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day! With Daniel

Pienciak (Free morning practice // afternoon workshop has a fee)

Practice Contact: Siobhan Hutchinson Siobhan@NextStepStrategiesLLC.com

Workshop Contact: Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com

May 5-7, 2017 TCC Teachers NJ Shore Retreat with Daniel Pienciak

Contact: Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com

May 11-14 Prescott, AZ TCC Retreat with Pam Towne

Contact: Pam Towne pamtowne@gmail.com

May 17-21 Buffalo, MN TCC Intensive with Sandy McAlister

Contact: Event Registrar: Ev Hanson-Florin ev.hanson.florin@gmail.com or Host: Nancy Werner-Azarski (nancyjanwa@aol.com)](<mailto:nancyjanwa@aol.com>)

June 15-18 2017 Teacher Conference Boulder, Colorado — [Click here for: Registration forms, Information, Conference Shirts, Transportation, Scholarships, Etc.:](#)

Conference Coordinator: Marie Dotts mcdotts@hotmail.com

Venue and Hospitality: Lisa VV tccbuckinghorse@yahoo.com

Registration and Scholarship: Leya Cragin l.cragin@comcast.net

Program and Outreach: Lisa Otero lisa.otero@post.harvard.edu

June 18-20 Boulder CO, Seijaku Teacher Accreditation with Pam Towne

Contact: Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com

June 18-20 Boulder CO, Seijaku Basics Course: Intro or Review with Daniel

Pienciak - Contact: Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com

Aug 21-25 Aston, PA Seijaku Meditation Retreat with Daniel Pienciak

Contact: Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com

Sept 14-18 Aston, PA TCC Intensive with Daniel Pienciak

Contact: April Leffler lirpaleff@rcn.com

Sept 24-27 Aston, PA Teacher Symposium with Sandy McAlister

Contact: April Leffler lirpaleff@rcn.com

Sept 26-29 Santa Barbara TCC Retreat with Pam Towne

Contact: Pam Towne pamtowne@gmail.com

Oct 13-15 Rochester, MN Seijaku Accreditation with Pam Towne

Contact: Bonnie Sokolov bonnietaichi@q.com

Oct 15-21 Rochester, MN Teacher Training (Accreditation) with Pam Towne

Contact: Bonnie Sokolov bonnietaichi@q.com

Nov 16 - 19, 2017 Albuquerque, NM TCC Intensive w/Daniel Pienciak
Contact: Marc Kwasman marcabq@gmail.com

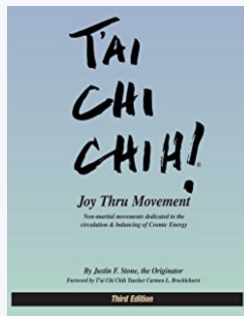
A TCC Retreat offers a wonderful way to:

- Deepen our experience and understanding of TCC
- Refine our movements, and especially HOW TO MOVE for a greater flow of Chi
- Give oneself a time of deep relaxation and personal renewal of body, mind and spirit
- Connect with others in the TCC Community.

By retreating from the activities of daily life to recharge your physical, mental & spiritual "batteries", you can gain a new perspective and move forward with greater ease and joy in your TCC practice and in your life . ~Pam Towne

More T'ai Chi Chih Events

Click here for additional events including those led by dedicated Teachers, as well as the Guide and Teacher Trainers. Attending T'ai Chi Chih events is an excellent way for you to receive helpful feedback, improve your practice, and to be with other T'ai Chi Chih practitioners.



Links to Resources & Materials

Justin Stone's DVDs/Videos, Books, CDs/Audios: [click here](#)

Sandy McAlister's Seated T'ai Chi Chih DVD: [click here](#)

Pam Towne's Serenity in the Midst of Activity DVD: [click here](#)

Skype Lessons with Pam: [click here](#)

Seijaku Booklet:

\$3/copy + \$1.20 (1st Class)

\$20/ 10 copies + \$3.60 (1st Class) or \$2.70 media rate

\$35/ 20 copies + \$6.00 (1st Class) or \$3.20 media rate

Make checks payable to: T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation

Send checks to: Ann Rutherford, 1534 Wagon Train SE, Albuquerque, NM 87123

Web Resources :

T'ai Chi Chih's website: [click here](#)

T'ai Chi Chih Community website: [click here](#)

Facebook: [click here](#)

Pinterest Justin's Quotes: [click here](#)

Pinterest: [click here](#)

Instagram: [click here](#)

Twitter: [click here](#)

Flickr: [click here](#)

Youtube: [click here](#)

T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation:

A 501(c)3 nonprofit agency which:

Sponsors our annual Teachers Conferences;

Provides scholarship funds for Teacher Accreditation and Continuing Education;

Tax deductible donations can be made out to and send to: T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation, PO Box 517, Midland Park, NJ, 07432

T'ai Chi Chih Association: [click here](#)

Produces a monthly publication - T'ai Chi Chih News. Sells books from Justin Stone's Recommended Reading List.

The Vital Force Journal quarterly newsletter: [click here to subscribe](#)

The Vital Force Archives: [click here](#)

T'ai Chi Chih Guides' free monthly newsletter -- Sign-Up link: [click here](#)

Past issues of the Guide's newsletters: [click here](#)



Mission Statement

The International T'ai Chi Chih Community of students and accredited teachers is dedicated to the personal practice of T'ai Chi Chih and to sharing with the world this form of moving meditation and its benefits affecting body, mind, and spirit.

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