

# Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi & Qigong: The Children of Tai Chi Farm Part 3

By CJ Rhoads

This is the final installment of the series of articles about the three Tai Chi festivals on the East Coast that were inspired by the original [Tai Chi Farm](#), an annual event hosted by Master Jou Tsung-Hwa at his farm in Warwick, NY back more than 20 years ago.

This third event, [Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi & Qigong](#) is the smallest and least well-known of the three, but with much bias I say it is the best one. It is, after all, the one I run with the help of a whole host of dedicated volunteers (most particularly Jacqui Blatt, Sharon McLendon, Deborah Mertrud, David Vanadia, Sarah Schwartz, Ramsey Yunan, and Stephen Watson). It is also the only event of the three run by a non-profit organization on an all-volunteer basis. It is held on Long Beach Island (LBI) in New Jersey.



The first two events were the [Tai Chi Gala](#), held in the Poconos in June, and [Master Jou Tsung-Hwa Birthday Celebration and Tai Chi Festival at Tai Chi Memorial Park](#), which was held in July in northern New Jersey. Check out the [articles](#) I've written about them, as they are both wonderful events which I highly recommend.

This is the third year for the annual Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi, & Qigong. Last year the symposium was marvelous, and had that most-wanted fabulous community feel to it. But the weather was nothing to write home about. Unless you like writing about unceasing cold rain. In 2018 it rained every day, putting the kibosh on our normal Sunrise Qigong on the Beach and Sunset Qigong on the Bay – except for the first night on Friday.



This year, it was the exact opposite. Friday was a bit iffy because hurricane Dorian was still making its

way slowly up the coast and it was a bit windy. But Saturday dawned beautiful, calm and sunny, which made our Sunrise Qigong a magnificent event.

As a matter of fact, the whole weekend was spectacular. Every single workshop had something of value to offer. After the potluck dinner on Friday we started with the *Shared Play of Tai Chi* by Laoshi Stephen Watson. The next morning Laoshi Stephanie Parello delved in detail into *Tai Chi Walk – the Only Exercise you May Ever Need*. Next was *Better Balance* with Laoshi David Vanadia. It was followed by Bill Phillips with *Meditation in Tai Chi Form and Push Hands*.



After lunch Laoshi Ramsey Yunan did *Chen Style Kuà Development Exercises*. Following that, Laoshi Steven Arbitman taught us three of the *Animals of Long Fist*. Then Stephen Watson taught us *Creating a Form with Intention and Meaning*.

The dinner was fantabulous – delicious and abundant. Too abundant! We ended up donating many leftovers to a soup kitchen on the mainland the next day. Saturday's activities came to a close with Laoshi Isse Elston Phillips leading the *Sunset Qigong* on Saturday night after dinner.

The final day started with the *Crane Frolic of Jiao Guorui* by Laoshi Kevin Siddons, Laoshi Tom Tague followed with the perfectly-paired *Five Elements Qigong and Healing Sounds*.

The last two workshops were excellent as well. Laoshi Stephen Watson did the *Cardinal Rose Set*, Then Laoshi Loretta Wollering finished up the day with her *Whole-Body Tool to Power Up your Tai Chi Practice*.



It is difficult to describe to others the deep connection I feel to everyone who comes to the Symposium. But based upon the comments about the weekend, I'm not the only one. Here are some of the comments from the evaluations on what they liked about this past weekend (2019):

- *The accessibility to the presenters, the quality of their presentations, and all the work the volunteers put into making the symposium a success.*
- *Location of the event, variety of topics, friendly group, plus sun-rise and sun-set Qigong!*
- *Openness and welcoming atmosphere.*



- *The fabulous presenters! Kind, very well informed as to the practice of the arts, generous with sharing their expertise.*
- *The workshop by Watson "Create your own form" gave me a lot to think about. I loved the evening Qigong at sunset.*
- *How willing to share knowledge and skill in a very welcoming environment.*
- *I love the location.*
- *Great people. Great information. Great weekend.*

Were there challenges? There sure were.

We still have work to do on getting the right schedule – we've tried three different ways of doing it over three different years, and next year we are going to try something else. More time after breakfast and after lunch, for example. Perhaps fewer workshops, or, if we get enough registrants early enough, more workshops so that we can run 2 at a time instead of only 1 at a time. Maybe longer workshops. Maybe shorter. Maybe a mixture. We are still working on it, but we won't stop until we get it right – the optimal schedule for the participants and presenters.

My inspiration for working so hard on this event is to reproduce that wonderful ***togetherness*** that I experienced as I camped out on Master Jou Tsung-Hwa's farm each year. So it is really important to me that - as much as possible in this stress-driven, overly-technical world - we can have a weekend that we just spend with *each other*, experienced enthusiasts and buoyant newbies alike.

What we can say for sure is that **there will be a 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi, & Qigong on or near the Jersey Shore**, and that it will be as **affordable** as possible. Anyone, at any level, who comes will be warmly welcomed and treated as a great friend. They will learn a lot, have tons of fun, and feel part of the connected community. That is what we can say for sure. But you can only tell if we meet this goal by joining us next year. **Be sure to tell a friend – and see you then!**



## **Bio**

Dr. Christine "CJ" Rhoads has been studying Tai Chi for almost thirty years. She was named the National Champion and Gold Medal winner in Female Push Hands in October 2009 in the *International Chinese Martial Arts Tournament* circuit. She has also been honored to be named *Taijiquan Promoter of the Year* and admitted to the *Hall of Fame by the Fellowship of United Martial Artists* in 2010. She is the managing director of HPL501c3 Institute, an umbrella organization with over 30 programs and partners devoted to helping develop Health, Prosperity, and Leadership for everyone, everywhere. Many of those programs are in the Integrative Health world including Tai Chi.