

# The Children of Tai Chi Farm

By CJ Rhoads

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In the beginning was *Tai Chi Farm*.

Okay, it wasn't really the beginning. After all, Qigong and Tai Chi (i.e. Taiji, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, or Taijiquan) have been around for hundreds if not thousands of years, though not always called by those names. Even here in the United States teachers from China and/or Taiwan have been around teaching the internal arts since the sixties and seventies.

But for me, personally, in 1995 my Tai chi teacher brought me to the boonies of New York to join hundreds of other people at the *Tai Chi Farm*, hosted by Master Jou Tsung-Hwa, and it was an eye-opening experience. Master Jou was a Math Professor from Rutgers University who brought dozens of Tai Chi Masters from different styles and backgrounds together and provided, at a very low cost, a weekend of camping and workshops called the *Zhang San Feng Festival* after the mythical founder of Tai Chi.

It changed my life.

My lineage at the time was very insular, and didn't really associate with other schools and styles. But at the Farm, not only were there other styles and lineages, they all seemed to *get along!* There was very little "my style is better than your style" (although if there was, it wasn't open and apparent as it would have gone against everything Master Jou Tsung-Hwa believed). It was through Tai Chi Farm that I got connected to *A Taste of China* run by Pat Rice in Winchester Virginia, which then connected me to dozens (and over the years, hundreds) of other Tai Chi organizations and events.

Sadly, the original event is no more. After Master Jou Tsung-Hwa's untimely death due to an automobile accident, the actual Farm in Warwick, New York, was sold.

I provide this background as a foundation for three articles that I plan to write; this one, about [Tai Chi Gala](#), the next one about [Tai Chi Park](#), and the final one about [Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi and Qigong](#). These three events are directly related to the *Tai Chi Farm*, children, as it were, of the parent event. These three events form a triumvirate of multi-style Tai Chi Festivals on the East Coast.



I just recently came from The Tai Chi Gala & Intuitive Arts Retreat which is lovingly run by one of Master Jou Tsung-Hwa's top students, Loretta Wollering. Loretta actually did most of the administrative back-end work running the *Tai Chi Farm* so she is masterful at creating a fabulous event with top-notch teachers and an incredible space. (For years Loretta ran her event out of hotels and universities, and I have to say that the current space is far superior. Being together in a community-oriented space surrounded by nature cannot be beat. Even better is staying together in cabins, though there are close-by hotel rooms for those who don't care for the dorm-room experience. And, of course, now that I don't have to make the-too-long trip all the way up to Albany New York; I can just come for a day or two if I need.) The Poconos, where the location of Tai Chi Gala has been since last year, is just a few hours west of New York City, a few hours north of Philadelphia. The facilities and staff are tremendous. This year, the food was really good, and the staff was ultra-responsive to our needs.

The worst problem we had (and it's a great problem to have) was that so many people came the parking lot did not get properly organized initially. That ended up with a lot of people being asked to move their cars so that others could get out. But we good naturedly worked it all out, getting everyone into spots that enabled everyone to get around. Next year they will probably put some kind of lines in the field to avoid the problem.



This year Loretta tried something new – having a workshop on Friday before the official "beginning" of the event at dinner. I was honored to be able to teach that workshop, and there were so many people we had to move out of the space allotted and down into the large flat courtyards where there was plenty of room. I will truthfully say I've never taught so many people at one time – somebody said they counted 80 people. They were all wonderful participants, following along extremely well and showing a great deal of interest in the short form I was teaching. I'm sure Loretta will do this again – perhaps even expand on it and have more than one workshop on Friday.



The rest of the workshop leaders were absolutely terrific – I didn't go to a single workshop that I thought was uninspired or boring. They were all unequivocally great. Space does not allow me to review the individual workshops, but I can tell you all the great workshop leaders who shared their knowledge, talents, and skills with the attendees (in order of their appearance in the program): **Shifu FengXiao Lu, Shifu Harry**

**Legg, Shifu David Ritchie, Sifu Ken Lo, Shigong RenGang Wang, Shifu William C. Phillips, Shifu Stephen Watson, Shigong Richard Clear, Shifu ZhongHua Lu, Shigong Dr. John Painter, Simo Angel Lo, Shifu Dr. Bob Bacher, Shifu Paul Ramos, Shifu Erik Oliva, Shifu Alan Marshall, Shifu Violet Li** and, of course, **Shifu Loretta Wollering.**



The event was only marred by the fact that for the first two days, Loretta was ill and unable to take up her normal duties, but it is a testimony to her organizational skills that no-one missed a beat; she had everything lined up so well, we carried on smoothly with everything. She was able to do the Sunday Sunrise workshop to everyone's relief and delight.

If you were one of the lucky ones who got to the *Tai Chi Farm* back in the day, coming to the *Tai Chi Gala* will be a wonderful bit of nostalgia. And if you were never that lucky, coming to the *Tai Chi Gala* next year May 30 – June 1<sup>st</sup>, will be treat. I highly recommend it for everyone.

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**Bio**

Dr. Christine "CJ" Rhoads has been studying Tai Chi for almost thirty years. 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.

Dr. Rhoads speaks and writes about entrepreneurship and the economics of healthcare and integrative health practices, business strategy, leadership development, and information technology. She's also a Professor in the College of Business at Kutztown University, an avid researcher, and a nine-time book author. She's won dozens of awards in business and academia including *Top Researcher of the Year*. She has also been honored to be named *Taijiquan Promoter of the Year* and admitted to the *Martial Arts Hall of Fame* by the United Fellowship of Martial Artists.