



# Master Jou, Tsung Hwa TAI CHI & QIGONG FESTIVAL

## 2023 Festival Report

After checking all the rooms and making sure everything was cleaned up at Mt. Lake Park on Sunday late afternoon, I was exhausted but overall pleased with how things turned out. Apparently many other people were as well. Here are some of the comments from the evaluations:

- *A very special thanks to the organizers and teachers. This was a very special event connecting with folks I haven't seen in person in a long time.*
- *This was a fantastic event, and I am immensely appreciative to the organizers and presenters. All nine sessions I attended were excellent, and I have so many takeaways.*
- *Great event and location! It was nice to have the option to be indoors in the a/c on a hot day.*
- *This event was outstanding.*
- *Loved the choice of Warwick, town & surroundings were lovely. The volunteer staff, to a person, were so helpful and kind. The cabin was clean. It was awesome to have a full size refrigerator/freezer & microwave.*
- *Awesome weekend!*
- *Congratulations, well done! You are appreciated.*
- *Have attended Master Jou Festival for most years in New Jersey and Tai Chi Farm in NY - Excellent and because affordable, I could attend. Thank You! Deep thanks to the organizers, volunteers & amazing teachers!*
- *No improvement needed, outstanding workshops; very detailed & very well presented*
- *Fantastic!*
- *Excellent!*
- *Excellent. Please have more sessions next year.*
- *Excellent class.*
- *Amazing workshop! Received a life changing gem!*
- *Well presented.*
- *I'm an absolute beginner and I was able to comprehend immediately & appreciate.*
- *Clear digestible instruction.*
- *Nice, clear, involved all participants. Learned something very practical.*
- *One of the best presentations at the Tai Chi Festival.*
- *A hidden gem ... knowledge and expertise were easily shared and gratefully received.*
- *Absolutely no improvements are possible. Excellent workshop. Expert presentation & knowledge shared.*
- *Fun & practical, teacher is generous & knowledgeable.*
- *It was helpful to see them do the movement, and working with us when we paired up. Excellent, thank you!*
- *Amazing teacher!*
- *Helpful guidance was given.*
- *Excellent teacher and practitioners*
- *An extremely useful (profound) workshop and boosted my understanding of my body*
- *Fabuloso*
- *Did a great job, good details, thorough and calm, nice energy. Thank you for the handouts and great class.*
- *Gave clear information in a calm, down-to-earth way, good pace, thank you for providing the equipment for our exercises. Great class! Thank you.*
- *Wicked good*
- *Very important training. Well presented.*
- *Nice workshop containing theory & practice.*
- *Very good, higher level material!*
- *Bravo!*
- *This was a powerful workshop. I didn't have words to express. I feel the things I took away were more useful and impacting than any workshop I have ever attended. Thank you sincerely and very best wishes for continued growth.*
- *Realized I've been swimming upstream most of my life. Must let go the fight.*
- *The best! Anytime I have the opportunity I always take [this instructor's] workshop!*
- *Excellent foundation concept of learning how to learn!*
- *More please.*
- *An excellent instructor and keeps teaching simple.*
- *No improvement possible, outstanding experience!*
- *Excellent presentation. Good flow.*
- *This was so excellent in every way, all levels of experiencing & learning. [The instructor] corrected some misunderstandings (myths) of phrases we read and heard through the years such as "sinking" using the kua (hip joint) instead of bending the knees. I learned so much in this class and I learned with ease. I'm so grateful.*



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And that was the tip of the iceberg! The emails, the voice mails – I think for the first time for the committee to make this event happen in a new venue we did extremely well.

But perfect? **Far from it!** We made LOTS of mistakes (and I think most of them were my mistakes personally!). For the most part, people were very understanding and recognized that putting on a festival like this is a very difficult endeavor, and especially in the early years, there are a lot of lessons to be learned. After a brief section on how the financials worked out, we will focus on what mistakes we made and what lessons we learned so that next year will be even better.

### Financials

Most people are very private about their financials. When a festival is organized by an individual person (like Bruce La Carrubba or Lorretta Wallering or Master Jou Tsung-Hwa), there is no reason for them to share any of the financial aspects of the event.

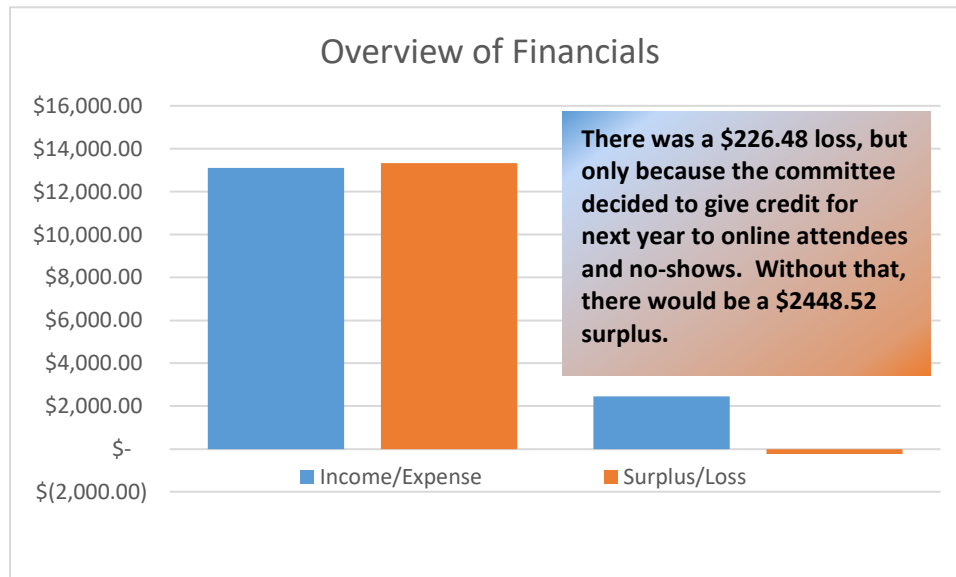
I can tell you from personal experience that many people assume that organizers make a lot of money from these sorts of events, and those people are wrong. There is no big money to be made in these events. More often, organizers lose money. For many, such as Master Jou Tsung-Hwa (and Bruce), it made no difference because the event was important to them, and if they spent a few thousand dollars to make it happen, they were happy to do it. It was a labor of love, not a money-making endeavor.

A few years ago I attended a large multi-week course taught by the Dalai Lama, and at the end of the event the financials of the event (income and expenses) was made public to those who attended. *What a great idea!* I thought. So ever since then, I've done the same for all the events that I helped organize. It's not that it is not a labor of love for me – it is. I only work on events with which I feel a deep inner connection. However, I'm not rich. And while I arrange for the upfront money to be paid as the deposit, I need to get that money back at the end of the festival. So probably, more than others, I'm very focused on making sure we cover our costs. I'm also trying to develop technologies that will make future registrations easier and more affordable, but in the meantime, development costs real money. I don't expect any one event to cover those development costs, but I do expect any events that can to cover their share of those costs. (On the upside, since these costs are "soft costs", if the event doesn't have the money, there is no charge for the services.)

The hope is always to break even, nothing more, nothing less. In that we did very well. It would have been nice to have been able to set aside the deposit on the venue for next year (25% of the cost of the venue), and we weren't able to do that. But we were able to cover all the costs, including providing a credit to the online attendees (because we had some technical issues for the first half of the festival) and the no-shows.



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As I noted, some people complain about the price that we set (\$185), but compared to the original cost of the Tai Chi Farm (which was \$100 for the weekend in 1996 if my memory serves), we are actually below that value when adjusted for inflation (which would be \$196 today). Furthermore, our price is lower than any other similar festival, and is set to simply break even, not make a surplus. (Since we are a non-profit, we don't make a profit in any case.) The cost of just the venue itself was \$5765.

Another issue is that people were unaware of our no-refund policy because they didn't understand that they are not actually paying for a service from an individual as other festivals, they are making a contribution to a non-profit and getting, in return, a benefit. Since we are a non-profit, at the end of the year everyone will get a statement identifying how much they contributed. If they also received some tangible benefit (such as overnight accommodations) that amount will be deducted from the charitable contribution portion. But because it is a contribution, not a payment for a service, we cannot give refunds.

As noted, we can, and do, give credit for future benefits, however. If you were not able to come to the festival, and/or you were unhappy with the results, please let us know and we will provide you with a letter of benefit that you can use next year to register instead of paying. The committee decided that, because the first three workshops in the online program could not be heard because the leader faced away from the camera, all online participants will be given a letter of benefit for next year.

## Better Next Year

I am a firm believer in continuous improvement. *Honor the past, but look to the future.* Or, as Master Jou would say *Make a little progress every day.* It is with this in mind that we did evaluations both on each workshop and on the overall festival. Unmentioned frustrations don't do anyone any good because nothing can be done about them. Mentioned frustration, when done in a way that is deliberate and respectful, improves the event for everyone. So next year there will be many improvements.



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### Housing

Neither the Tai Chi Farm, nor the Master Jou Tsung-Hwa Birthday Party and Tai Chi Festival had any kind of housing for participants (though limited housing was available for workshop leaders). The other two sister festivals, the Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi & Qigong and the Tai Chi Gala did have housing. Having a lot of people stay in the same place adds a great deal of community spirit to the Festival, but it comes at a cost, both financial and logistical. In similar events, for accommodations, the Symposium was about \$300 per person for the weekend and Tai Chi Gala was about \$500 per person for the weekend. Master Jou Festival was only \$170 per person. However – because the venue charges for EACH person even if they share a bed, some people were surprised because it ended up being \$340 for a couple. (In a hotel, people are generally charged for the room, not by the person. One person got offended and very upset when we pointed out that we had to charge for each person even though they were sharing a bed.) We apologize, but we are bound by the policy of the venue (again, unlike previous festivals where there was no price to the venue).

Furthermore, Mt. Lake Park was a new venue – not just to us, but to the Director, Samantha Walter (Sam). Ours was the first large group, and the first to use the housing, since the Park was taken over by the town of Warwick in September. (Formerly it was Camp Kutz, which went defunct several years earlier.) This created great challenges. Since I'd never seen the Park, I had to make many decisions site unseen (pun intended ☺). Some members of the committee visited and reported back, but since they'd never before run an event like this, they weren't able to convey the information I needed to make better decisions. Even if they could have, the rooms themselves were in flux – Sam didn't even get the certificate of occupancy until the Monday before our event, and the air conditioning in the lodge didn't get installed until Wednesday. I was unaware of this, but it explained why, upon getting there, the rooms did not have the amenities (like refrigerators and air conditioning, coffee makers or even lamps) that was expected. Furthermore, the two offices that we reserved for the workshops were full of furniture from some of the newly renovated cabins and unavailable. Sam gave us (at no additional cost) the two spaces we didn't reserve (because we couldn't afford them: the Pavilion and the Dance Studio). Additionally, there was no list of *which* room had *which* amenity, or even which room was where, so again, sight unseen, we were assigning people to rooms without knowing which floor they were on and whether they had things like coffee makers or refrigerators. This caused confusion and unhappiness.

There were also odd items regarding getting into and out of the Park. The town always closes the gate early in the evening and doesn't open it until the next morning. There was a remote control opener available in the mailbox so you could get in at any time, and if you drove toward the gate it would open automatically so you could get out. But some didn't know this. We put this information into the guidelines that was sent out before the event, but if you didn't read or remember that, you were stuck. This happened to several people.

Furthermore, unbeknownst to me, neither my phone, nor Cooper's phone had cell service at the Park. Since these were the numbers we told people to call for help, it caused a problem when people couldn't get help when needed. (It was especially difficult since I developed laryngitis, and couldn't speak a word the majority of the Festival).



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One of the issues is that Sam and Keith are *it* when it comes to cleaning the place. Like many small towns, the town council may not necessarily understand the needs of a place like Mt. Lake Park which really needs a staff of people, not just two. On the down side, it means they may need extra help making the place nice for renters. On the up side it means that fewer other groups will be in competition for the space. (And if you didn't hear the story of the 23 places I called within 50 miles of Wantage NJ that were already booked for July or really expensive before finding Mt. Lake Park to be both open and reasonably priced, you should recognize what a *find* this place is, in Warwick of all places! We believe Master Jou had a hand in leading us to it.)

So next year:

1. List each individual cabin/apartment with their amenities and have people choose, on a first come first serve basis, which one they want.
2. Send info about the gate to everyone beforehand in email. Highlight it.
3. Keep check-in open until 11:30 pm on Friday.
4. Start earlier on Friday – have early afternoon check-in.
5. Give out a telephone number for help that WORKS on the premises.
6. Make sure people know they **cannot** email for help during the event as we can't always get email.
7. Get a volunteer group together to go up one weekend before the event to help clean and prepare the premises.
8. Ask Sam if they could clean the pavilion floor.
9. Ensure that the Dance Studio is not overly cold.
10. Ensure that the Lodge Lounge is not overly warm.
11. Do not have workshops in the dining room (too much noise)
12. Find a way to cordon off the hallway from the lounge or move the workshop to Office 2 or a different room.
13. Ensure that all workshop leaders know the start and end times of their workshops.
14. Investigate whether we should have longer or shorter workshops.

### Hybrid

This was also the first time we tried to do a hybrid event (on-line and in-person at the same time).

Hybrid is tricky – much trickier than a pure online conference. We ran into several problems (the first of which was the person we hired to set up the equipment to run the online portion quit for another job shortly before the Festival). Ramsey and I did our best, but we could not get the microphone to work properly with the computer at all. The microphone did work with the phone (i.e. the second camera), but then we would get feedback from the computer attached to the projector so we couldn't allow the speaker to be on, which prevented the people from being able to call out questions. The setup for chat was not really conducive so we missed a lot of questions and comments until we finally set up a second computer just to monitor the chat. Furthermore, the first three workshop leaders taught with their back to the camera until we finally insisted that the in-person participants should gather around the camera so that the workshop leader was facing them all. So next year:

15. Use 4 devices: one to manage the sound, one to allow the workshop leader to see all the participants in gallery view, one to allow the participants to see the workshop leader in speaker view, and one to manage the chat.



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16. Test the sound for hybrid zoom session so that audience can talk AND hear. Make sure the microphone works well.
17. Have a practice session with each workshop leader who has been chosen for the hybrid so that they know where to stand and what to do. All workshop leaders must face the camera.
18. Put the laptops on stands so that they are at the right height to stand and work instead of on a low table.

### Food

The committee early on had expected to provide food, just as Bruce had. Traditionally Bruce would provide breakfast, order pizza for everyone for lunch, and then serve sesame noodles (Master Jou's noodles) (amongst other things) for dinner. After dinner those of us who were hard core Tai Chi fans would sit around listening to stories of Master Jou.

However, the committee had to change their minds and go back to the Tai Chi Farm policy, which was not to provide any food at all. First, serving food would be expensive. Adding the cost of food would raise the price even more than it had already raised. Since we were already getting push-back on the \$15 increase for the price, to add another \$60 or \$70 to provide food for everyone seemed prohibitive. Second, we discovered that New York, unlike New Jersey, had very strict licensing for providing food and that, since we were not licensed, we would not be able to provide the food ourselves but would be required to hire a caterer. The combination of these two put the kibosh on the idea of providing food. So we provided a list of eateries and expected people to eat on their own.

However, we didn't realize that there would be no facilities for providing coffee either. (There was a large commercial coffee maker that we assumed we would be allowed to use, but it turned out that it was not hooked up and could not be used.) And while we did budget something for snacks, they ran out halfway through the first day. Similarly, there was a water fountain with a bottle spout which we thought could be used, only to find out that it also did not work.

Luckily, several people got together and made arrangements not just for coffee but also tea. Water was available out of the tap (relatively good tasting, too). And several other participants donated other food for snacks, so we were not completely without food.

However, the lack of food, and the gathering for meals, was sorely missed. Many noted that we had lost the "family reunion feel" because we did not eat together. So although it may make registration difficult, next year we hope to provide a meal and hire a caterer to provide food for those who wish to eat together as a group. We will:

19. Get someone to take responsibility for all food.
20. Hired a caterer who will provide:
  - a. Midday or evening meal (catered) on Saturday
  - b. Coffee/Tea/etc in the morning
  - c. Snacks throughout the day

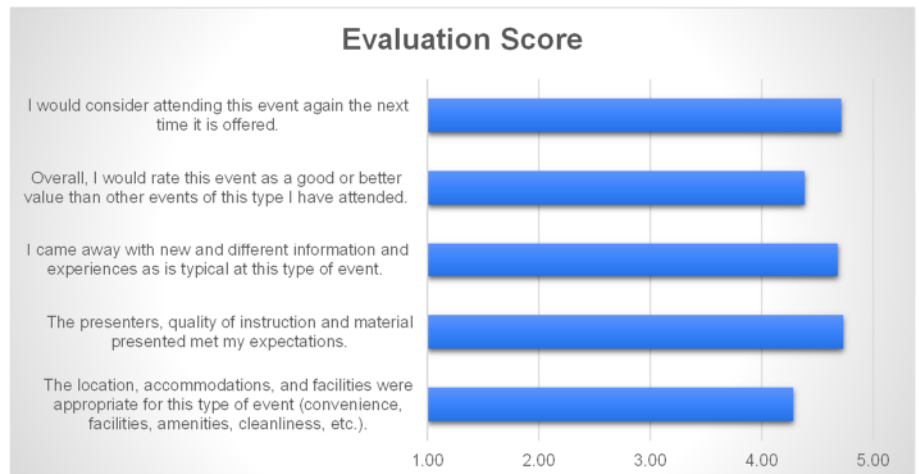


## Evaluations

One thing the group will be discussing is evaluations. From an organizers perspective, providing people with the opportunity to evaluate the presenters enables us to encourage and highlight excellent presenters, as well as encouraging improvement in presenters who did not get such great evaluations. However, some people do not like to be evaluated, and Bruce has never done them at this event before. Some people think of things like evaluations as "too commercial". Since a lot of time and energy went into doing the evaluations and making them easy for people to complete (preprinting the workshop leader and topic on the sheets, for example), it would make sense for the committee to evaluate the evaluations to determine if the value we received from them is worth the time and energy to do them.

Evaluations do provide us with a whole host of things we need to improve upon – some of which the organizers would never even have known about if not for the evaluations. And, of course, people were also not shy about telling us what we did right as well as what we did wrong. This document provided some of the comments in the beginning, but here are the overall results.

The last question, based on comments, was the most difficult to answer. Some people answered that the venue was great – perhaps seeing the potential in the future rather than judging it harshly on the items that it fell short on for this first event. Others could not get past the problems given that they were expecting luxurious accommodations based upon my description of full kitchens and air conditioning in every cabin and apartment. (Again – many apologies!). Some rooms were too hot and some rooms were too cold. And the last-minute change in where the workshops would be held was very confusing.



One person took issue with the pavilion that most people found to be a fabulous space. The person said that it was full of "dead chi". While I can't comment on that, I can say that it was full of bird droppings. We are asking that the floor be cleaned next year (or will clean it ourselves with a volunteer work crew before the event). I will add, however, that the bird droppings is generally from the [cliff swallows](#) that nest on the camp property. While common in the west, to have breeding cliff swallow on the east coast

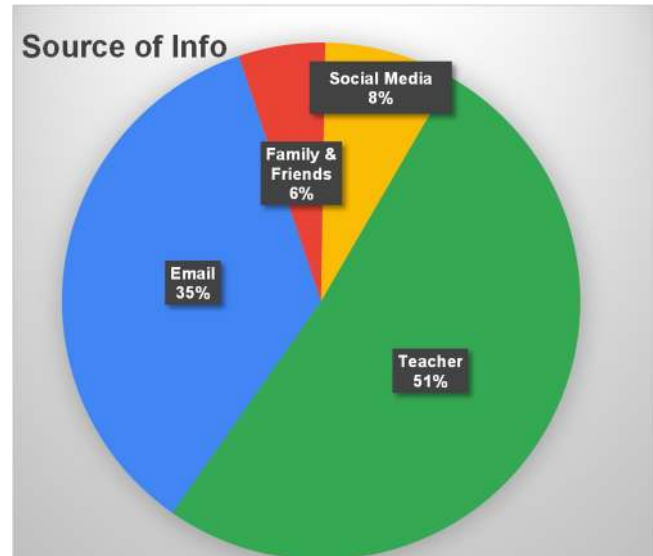




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is relatively rare, and a point of pride of the town of Warwick. Birders from all over come to see the cliff swallows and they don't mind a bit of bird poop.

The evaluations also enabled us to know how people found out about this event. More than 50% found out about the event from their teacher, but 35% found out from the email sent out from the organizers using the list Bruce originally provided or the list provided by Health, Prosperity, & Leadership Institute. A smaller number found out from family and friends or social media. The committee was a bit concerned initially that putting out advertisements on social media would bring in people who were unfamiliar with Master Jou and who wouldn't understand the purpose for us getting together. They did not want us to become just like any other Tai Chi Festival.



However, the initial registrations were so low, we decided that in order to keep the event break-even, we opened up the marketing and tried social media and advertising on other websites in addition to the normal email list. Next year we will open up the marketing to social media and additional non-traditional lists from the very beginning in order to improve the registration numbers.

### Online Registration

This was the first Master Jou Tsung-Hwa Birthday Celebration and Tai Chi Festival that provided an online registration process. (The simple registration process for the online version of the festival during COVID does not count as we didn't need complete information for that.) Health, Prosperity, & Leadership Institute tried for years to find a registration system that works for conferences that include housing. But they were all difficult to use and didn't provide the registrar with complete information, so we are trying to develop one ourselves. Those that used the system, therefore, were beta-testing a new kind of registration system that doesn't exist anywhere else. It was partially successful as many people were able to use it without problems. But about 25% had problems with the system and became frustrated. (Again, many apologies). We did fix most of the items that did not work correctly by the end of the registration period, but only after somebody found the issue (and therefore was frustrated by it).

One of the nuisance points for the workshop leaders is that they were never required to register before, since Bruce just verbally kept track of who he told to come. Bruce also gave "lifetime waivers" to some people, telling them that they didn't ever need to register (but neglecting to tell us who they were). Once we found out about the lifetime waivers we honored them, but since we didn't know initially we had asked those people to pay.

In 2021 Bruce did, finally, give in to my argument that we needed everyone, even workshop leaders, to sign a registration form waiver because without it they could not be covered under the insurance. (The





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event has been covered under HPL Insurance since Bruce joined HPL officially in 2019 though he was unofficially part of HPL since we started doing his website in 2010.) However, he only did it that one year so not everyone recognized the change. For us, workshop leaders were asked to register. Again, most did without problems, but a few did not feel that the process was easy. And some were offended and/or would not do so.

Next year the online registration system will be much easier. We will, of course, always continue to have paper registrations so that anyone who wishes to avoid the online registration can do so. But since we need to hire someone to enter those registrations into the system, that adds significantly to the cost. And people who wish accommodations will still need to register online because it will be first come, first served.

So, there are several changes we plan for registrations:

21. Put phone number to call right on registration (both paper and online).
22. Make online registration easier.
23. Ensure that one person can fully register the second (or more) person(s) and have all records created. Find a way to get the waiver signed by those person(s).
24. Put the *no refund policy* on registration page.
25. Pay a registrar person to manage registrations and room assignments.

### Festival Name and History

While a more in-depth look at the history of the name and the three sister Festivals can be found on the website, this section will share a brief look at the ever-evolving name(s) of the different multi-style events around tai chi and qigong in the New York/New Jersey/Pennsylvania area.

Master Jou Tsung-Hwa started doing the Zhang San Feng Festival in the 70s, after he purchased a farm in Warwick New York. It eventually became known colloquially as the Tai Chi Farm, and hundreds of people would come each year, camp on the property, and attend a huge number of workshops. Because it was the largest of its kind, on a pretty esoteric topic that most people had never heard of (Tai Chi Ch'uan), it became widely known among Tai Chi circles.

After Master Jou's untimely death in 1998, three people involved in the Tai Chi Farm started their own events to honor the farm and Master Jou; the Zhang San Feng Festival/Tai Chi Gala by Lorretta Wollering, Master Jou Tsung-Hwa Birthday Celebration and Tai Chi Festival by Bruce La Carrubba, and the Tai Chi Festival/Symposium for Integrative Health, Tai Chi, and Qigong by me, CJ Rhoads. We all knew each other and supported each other in our endeavors and we each did things a little differently. Of the three Bruce's event seemed to focus mostly on Qigong rather than Tai Chi. Qigong is an umbrella term referring to any energy exercise or meditation including Tai Chi Ch'uan as just one subcategory. Lorretta's events had more of a focus on T'ai Chi Ch'uan: push hands, weapons, and forms. The Symposium had more of a focus on the academic study of tai chi and qigong as well as the proven health benefits (which is my research interest).



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Some sharp eyes notices that I added "and Qigong" to the name *Master Jou Tsung Hwa's Birthday Celebration and Tai Chi Festival*. I thought it would be innocuous and would more properly position the event so that people would understand the focus. The workshops Bruce taught were on health-oriented meditations and I wanted to highlight that fact. Bruce would also shy away from weapons, for example, and one year didn't want me to do a sword workshop. He preferred my Qigong workshops and asked me to do them every year.

Although I briefly discussed this change in an organizer meeting, after the event I discovered people thought I was trying to change the event (which was the opposite of my intention). Also some people were bothered by the mixed transliteration: in the 60s the Wade-Giles method was used to translate the Chinese characters into T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Chi Kung while today the Pinyin method is used to translate the Chinese characters into Taijiquan and Qigong. I understand.

However, more than a decade ago a consensus of experts decided the most appropriate term for what we do is Tai Chi & Qigong. While I originally balked at the removal of *ch'uan (fist)*, I eventually began to agree with the consensus. For one, primarily as a researcher and technologists, the aspirations (') caused problems. Furthermore, I wanted to include the broader aspects and not just the form, push hands, and weapons. Finally the unaspirated Tai Chi was popular in the media and most people had heard of it. The added Qigong conveyed an accuracy in order to help educate people that Tai Chi is just one type of Qigong. They didn't have to memorize forms or learn fighting techniques in order to get the health benefits of Tai Chi.

In any case, this year we will have some directed discussions on what the name should be. Besides which, Master Jou Tsung-Hwa Birthday Celebration Tai Chi & Qigong Festival is simply too long. This issue is also related to the next section.

### **Back to Wantage NJ?**

Nothing would be better than if Bruce La Carrubba is well enough to organize the festival next year, we will be going back to his house in Wantage NJ. I can step back from the organizer role and Bruce can go back to what he loves to do. There would be no cost for the venue, and Bruce can go back to providing food for people as well as accommodations for some of the workshop leaders. But if that is impossible, we will go back to Mt. Lake Park and get together there again. Or, perhaps, we could have some portion of the event at Bruce's house and some portion 30 minutes away in Warwick.

### **A Family Reunion? A Birthday Celebration? A Festival? A Gala?**

By far one of the most difficult issues to deal with is the complaint that we are losing our way, becoming too commercial, not paying enough attention to Master Jou. There are many issues involved here that must be balanced.

It is true that with a paid-for venue the "family reunion feel" has changed, and may change even more. The thing about family reunions is that they are exclusive events; you must be a member of the family to attend. In terms of the Master Jou Festival, many consider the family to be the students of Master Jou. Those of us who were fortunate to be active in Tai Chi when he was teaching know what an honor it was to listen to him talk, read his books, and learn from his experiences. He was truly a gifted master of the



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art and (in writing at least) a great communicator. (Personally, I could never understand a word he said. Other than his long-time students and friends, few could. It was, as they say, part of his charm. ☺) But Master Jou's books clearly explain the fundamentals and principles of Tai Chi (and Qigong) in great detail.

If you knew Master Jou, then you knew what kind of a person he was. *Always* welcoming. *Always* kind. He did not denigrate others or what they knew, but made sure everyone was always welcome. And if you didn't know him personally, listen to John Painter's memories

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vo8dQgeqytI>) He will tell of the story when someone came to the Tai Chi Farm and set up a vendor table despite being critical of Master Jou. John Painter took it upon himself to tell that person they were not welcome, and Master Jou caught him. Master Jou became angry at John because, he said; *Everyone welcome! Everyone!*

Certain people feel that only those who knew Master Jou, who loved Master Jou, who studied with Master Jou should be at the Master Jou Birthday Celebration and Tai Chi Festival. If new people don't express a strong interest in learning Master Jou's teachings, or demonstrate their ignorance of those teachings, they are made to feel unwelcome. Those of us who know of Master Jou's books and teachings know that others would benefit from them. But people who have already mastered another art, for example, may not realize this (at least not at first).

It became apparent during this event that there are those who are in the "inner circle" and those who are not. Newer people were expected to "earn their stripes" by expressing a deep appreciation of Master Jou and all his teachings and demonstrating the same underlying principles and foundations. They are expected to have read his book and already be familiar with the lingo. Otherwise, they were made to feel that they do not belong.

This is human nature. We all like to hold on to what we learned and what we value and tend to think less of people who haven't learned the same things or valued the same things. It is also the "Old Oaken Bucket" Syndrome. (If you have never heard of this syndrome, [read the poem](#) by Samuel Woodworth [and the [parody](#)]). In general, the Old Oaken Bucket syndrome is the longing for days before, when we perceive that things were perfect and wonderful. It's like several people told me; *we don't like change. And this is change. We know that it has to change, but we don't like it, so we were disappointed that it wasn't the same as before.*

Previous workshop leaders were especially vulnerable to the old oaken bucket syndrome. At previous festivals, everyone there knew everyone else. They knew who Master Jou's students were because it was "just family".

But now we are inviting workshop leaders who did not study under Master Jou. Even worse, we can't afford to provide food and housing to everyone as we did before. For example, we asked workshop leaders to pay for their own food and in some cases part of the accommodations if they were bringing others. We were not even sure until July if we could offer them free accommodations because we weren't sure we could afford it.



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Those of us at a certain age encountered tai chi 20, 30, even 50 or 60 years ago. Some of us turned into life-long enthusiasts, playing just about every day whether we have a class or not. We know the lingo, the terms, the culture. We gladly sat at the foot of Master Jou and other masters to soak up all their knowledge and teachings like a sponge. In our minds, the next generation should now be wanting to be that sponge for the knowledge that we have gained over so many years. They should be thirsting for it, picking up the lingo, the terms, the culture, something known as "*tribal knowledge*". And it is damn frustrating that so few appears to care, or even listen.

I know first hand, and understand completely, this feeling. But I also know something else – it does no one any good to cry about this state of affairs. Those who knew Master Jou, who studied with Master Jou, who loved Master Jou – we are getting older. And fewer. Every year. We don't have enough numbers ourselves to put on an event of this type. If we stay exclusive, we won't have a Festival at all. If we stay exclusive, we will not endure, and Master Jou's legacy will die.

**It is up to us to spread his legacy and honor his teaching. It is our *responsibility*.** We cannot quit just because it's frustrating, because the newer generation doesn't appear to be listening. And we certainly are not going to succeed by making them feel unwelcome and unwanted at our event. We are adults, not children. We can recognize our longing for what was before without alienating others for their lack of tribal knowledge.

Furthermore, Master Jou invited **many** other workshop leaders to his farm; many of whom never studied with him and did not follow his teachings. Master Jou learned from anyone and everyone. Some people denigrated him for not having a single lineage. I thought that learning from a variety of sources was a very smart thing to do and thought very highly of him for that reason.

We must do what Master Jou did. *Everyone Welcome! Everyone!* And if we want to spread his knowledge and legacy, we must first *Seek to understand before seeking to be understood*. The generation who didn't know Master Jou will not listen or pay attention if we denigrate the already existing knowledge and masters of the current generation. It would behoove us to find out what they know, what they value. Then *and only then* will we be able to slowly introduce them to Master Jou's world, to Master Jou's knowledge.



## Master Jou, Tsung Hwa TAI CHI & QIGONG FESTIVAL

It is true that we thought the focus on Master Jou's teachings would just happen by osmosis. We know now that it won't. That's why we must be very deliberate and plan for this evolution. That's why next year, we will consider doing the following:

26. Put Master Jou's teachings up on the walls throughout the venue.
27. Hold part of the event at Bruce's house in Wantage NJ.
28. Highlight those who directly studied with Master Jou.
29. Highlight workshops and demos that are the direct teachings of Master Jou.
30. Put a "Ask Me About Master Jou" on the nametags of people who knew him.
31. Hold a panel discussion on Master Jou's teachings and invite his top students to share.
32. Bring some of the memorabilia from Bruce's house to the new location.
33. Create a Master Jou time capsule with memories from the Farm.
34. Deliberately tell Master Jou stories before and after cake on Saturday.
35. Have a pilgrimage to Master Jou's Gazebo.

There are many ways that we can honor Master Jou and Bruce La Carrubba without making people feel like they are not part of the family. As I've said before: This event is not my event. This event is not Bruce's event. This event is not the workshop leader's event. This event is not even Master Jou's student's event, nor the participant's event. **The Master Jou Birthday Celebration, Tai Chi & Qigong Festival belongs to all of us, together.** The warm and wonderful invitation to join from Master Jou, from Bruce, and from the organizing committee: *Come Celebrate* is not a limited one. Yes, we want to have the feel of a family reunion. But ours is **not an exclusive family, but an inclusive one.** *Everyone is welcome! Everyone!*



## **Addendum**

On November 6, 2023 Bob Klein sent me an email with additional suggestions. I'm including this addendum so that everyone can get the benefit of his thoughts.

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Dear CJ,

Just read the changes you are planning. While I think that bring information about Master Jou into the festival is important, I think one element of the festivals is not being addressed. Master Jou didn't make a big presence at the festivals. He was walking around somewhere or watching the Yankees if there was a game on. Even at the teachers meetings on Saturday evenings, he let Yang, Ming-Jing take over.

It wasn't so much that the presence of Master Jou was missing. It was that the feeling of community was missing. I think what we need is to start Saturday with everyone at the same place. We can do a little meditation or Chi-gung, but then go over the history of the festivals and have the teachers introduce themselves. There should also be a discussion of how Tai Chi has "spread out", how each line of Tai Chi, each teacher, has developed in their own way. I think it is important to discuss the issue of "how far can we go before the term, "Tai Chi" doesn't mean anything anymore.

For example, we have traditional and competition push hands. Many people don't realize that they are two completely different things. At the Tai Chi Park, many people told me that they don't like push hands and had very bad experiences trying it. When I showed them traditional push hands, they were surprised that this practice even existed (even though competition push hands only began in 1975). It is not that one is right and one is wrong, but students need to understand that a lot of Tai Chi practice has been created only recently - like the Tai Chi XYZs (Tai Chi Chuh, Tai Chi Easy, Tai Chi Fit, etc.). Many people really don't know what Tai Chi is, where it came from or the principles behind it.

We need to start the festival out with a basic refresher course, maybe for just one hour. Then, if people want to talk further, they can do so during lunch or other free times.

During demonstrations, it would be very helpful if the teacher could explain their ideas of Tai Chi principles and how what they are doing expresses those principles. 5 minutes would be enough to explain things and another 3 to 5 minutes for the demo. Otherwise it would just be like surfing through youtube. This could also be done during those meal times when you are planning to provide food. People can sit around eating and watching the demos. At this time, stories can also be told about peoples' experiences at the Tai Chi Farm and Park and their memories of Master Jou.

Ceremonies have always been part of Taoist and other traditions. The Tai Chi Farm had its dragon parade and bringing incense sticks to the Chang, San-feng alter. John Painter had his huge Bagua circles, which were really like a ceremony. This serves to knit people together and make them feel that they are not just attending a business conference.

It would be great if each teacher could put together a little pamphlet about their teaching philosophy and the principles they emphasize. This might stimulate conversation between the participants and the teachers. It would show how diverse the approaches to training can be and can be something people can take home with them to consider.





## **Master Jou, Tsung Hwa** **TAI CHI & QIGONG FESTIVAL**

While many people didn't know Master Jou, it is time they got to know each other. We don't need to use the festival to "worship" anyone, but to deepen our practice and strengthen the Tai Chi community. It wasn't the lack of pictures of Master Jou that is the problem, it was the lack of cohesion. Honestly, no one is going to remember specific forms or chi-gung sets they were taught at the festival, but they will remember the spirit of the people and of the weekend. If they were excited by what a specific teacher taught, they can contact them after the festival to get more training.

There was a "magic" of the Farm and Park that was created by the cohesion of all those strange people, each with their own wild versions of the practice. I think most of the attendees just wanted to absorb that "magic", like re-charging their batteries. One more important point. There used to be areas of the Farm and Park, that were perfect for people to congregate and interact. At this venue, everything seemed to be just a thoroughfare. It wouldn't take much to set up some area that would be comfortable for people to hang out and conducive to interaction. Maybe just a few chairs, tables, pictures of Master Jou, and other ornaments plus water and cups. That's all it takes to get people to interact.

Lastly, a course for those who are running the festival, on how to interact with people, would be helpful. Those courses are standard parts of corporate and sales training and can be found in colleges and community colleges.

I hope these ideas are helpful.

Sincerely,

Bob