

STUDENT PROFILE: PATRICIA B. HSIEH

By WTS Staff

Originally Published September 2005

The first time that Patricia Hsieh had an opportunity to watch people practicing T'ai Chi was in Taipei, Taiwan. It was, she describes, a beautiful spring day 24 years ago when a friend from China led her and others to a park located in Tein-Mou. She describes the moment of discovery, "At that time, I didn't have any knowledge about T'ai Chi and like many people it looked to me just like a harmonious dance." She says that she couldn't stop watching the forms being played, but she intimates there was something else — "something that I could feel but could not describe."



Patricia first saw T'ai Chi as "just like a harmonious dance."

Over two decades later, T'ai Chi and Patricia crossed paths again. It was another park, but this time it was Patchogue. She joined the late summer edition of *T'ai Chi in the Park* in 2002 and joined the studio within days of the session's end. "It's amazing," says Laoshi, "the number of people that come to T'ai Chi the way that Patricia did." Apparently many people (such as Lem Coley, April 2005) witness the unfolding of T'ai Chi forms in one park or another, in this country or that country. The images seem to stay with them until the time becomes right to bring the image into reality. Laoshi tells us of a retired NYC police officer that would see a group of elderly Chinese playing forms every morning in a small park near the courthouse in Manhattan. This was in the late-1960s. He joined a class at Commack Public Library in 2004!

According to Patricia, she needed the 24 years of travel and experience to learn what it was that she had found so captivating – but unable to describe – in that Taiwanese park. She says, "That graceful flow was coming from Qi – in balance."

Her experience with Laoshi at Shorefront opened a door to the possibility that she had found a way in which to achieve balance and inner peace in her own life. As others have indicated in their profiles, she was at a time of turmoil with challenges arising from her work, as well as challenges in various aspects of her personal life. In her words, " ... two sons (Michael, 24, and Adrian, 17) are a very personal matter." She felt that there was a need for something more than just what someone might call "sport." In finding *T'ai Chi in the Park*, she says, "There it was!"

After Paul Adago, Jr., Patricia is the most senior student in the kwoon. She has completed *Grasp Sparrow's Tail to the Four Cardinal Directions*, several incarnations of *Cloud Hands & Horse's Mane*, and *Dragon Strikes to the Four Diagonals*. In 2003 she was part of the very small contingent from Water Tiger School that participated in *World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day* at Central Park. She was recently sharing the memory with newer students at *Alive After Five* on the streets of the village. Patricia remembers the dust, the cold, the phenomenal experience of playing *Grasp Sparrow's Tail* among hundreds of other T'ai Chi artists, and the unbelievable feats demonstrated in the special presentations. Laoshi says, "She's never really hesitated to step out in public and represent Water Tiger – and I couldn't be happier than to have her do so."

"I am so grateful for being a part of the Water Tiger community, and especially for Laoshi's commitment to his students," Patricia tells us, emphatically. She adds that her time with T'ai Chi – in and out of the kwoon – bring her "joy, peace, and a wide smile."

She goes on to say that she also holds admiration for the commitment of her fellow students. She demonstrates her admiration by quoting several of them to help us understand what T'ai Chi has brought to her life:

Matt Kintzel (former student) — “T'ai Chi is like soap, it cleanses. I see things in fresh ways ...”

Neal Henry Stark (former student) — “I feel that my training has given me the ability to someday achieve a point where I can maintain an inner calm no matter what is going on around me.”

Paul Adago Jr. — “To me T'ai Chi embodies all of the best attributes of meditation, yoga, and karate.”

Lem Coley — “I feel like I'm learning something difficult to express.”

John M. Davis — “I soon found this T'ai Chi nurtured balance – or balance awareness – quickly migrating into everyday life. Achieve balance and you can manage stress, manage stress and you experience life with the joy and enthusiasm of a child.”

Laoshi tells us that she demonstrates the type of enthusiasm John mentions when it comes to learning. “Patricia is dedicated to deepening her understanding of the art and of the underlying philosophy,” he says. “She and I often have conversations around the concepts of chewing through the thicker aspects of Taoism and Buddhism.” He continues and says that sometimes neither of them believes that they can truly taste – let alone swallow – what they're chewing, but that both of them are willing to take the bite.



Patricia demonstrating *Grasp Sparrow's Tail* with McElroy Laoshi at *Alive After Five* on August 5, 2005.

According to Patricia, another big bite is fitting her T'ai Chi practice into her everyday life. She tells us, however, she treats this challenge just like any challenge in meditation: “I acknowledge the thought and I let it go.”

She closes by sharing with us something that she considers a certainty, “Even a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step’ and I started that single step during The Year of the Horse in 2002.”

