

NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS

AKEMASHITE OMEDETOO GOZAIMASU.

"CONGRATULATIONS ON THE NEW YEAR"

This is the formal greeting to each and everyone one we meet on New Year's Day. The celebration of the New Year is one of the most important festivals in Japan and for Aikido as well. From December, all bills are paid, and all personal matters are taken of. As for the dojo, everyone begins the hard task of cleaning. The New Year's Day celebration is prepared for and many New Year's greetings must be written and sent off and many personal visits must be made to friends and business acquaintances to say thank you their support and help. Special kinds of food are prepared just for this occasion known as *O-sechi Ryori*. This is also the time when *mochi* is prepared. This is pounded sweet rice made into small cakes which are eaten in celebration of the New Year. I remember the sweet shops in Little Tokyo used to make only these rice cakes in the later part of December and all the stores would close for about two weeks beginning from January 1st. Today, everyone is more business-minded, so all the stores open up for business from January 2nd. In Japan, many stores still maintain the tradition of closing up shop for at least one week.

In Aikido, students spend all their time fixing up the dojo for the New Year. The sensei must greet all the friends and supporters of the dojo and send out the New Year's greeting. It is a very busy time.

O-Sensei went to Iwama to the Aikido Shrine to pray and returned to Tokyo to join the New Year's celebration where all the students and patrons of the dojo came to eat and drink. It was an occasion for many words of thanks and greetings. It was also a time when special awards and honorary ranks were presented to important people. In his last year, O-Sensei gave his last public demonstration on the occasion of the New Year in 1969. He passed away in April of the same year. His uniform which he wore on this occasion is preserved in a sacred place in our dojo. It is a great honor for us. The dojo usually closed for several days and practice soon resumed again.

Around the third week of January, business traditionally begins again with the *Kagami-biraki* celebration.

This refers to an ancient legend in Japan. Amaterasu Omi-kami, a diety who represents the sun was frightened by her brother, Susano-o Omikoto and ran away hiding in a cave. When she entered the cave, the world was plunged into darkness. All the gods came to plead with her to come out but to no avail. One of the goddesses finally jumped up onto a rock, lifted up her skirts in a very obscene manner and began to dance and sing. All the gods began to laugh and enjoy this unexpected bit of entertainment. Amaterasu, hiding in the cave, began to wonder what all the commotion was outside and when she stuck her head out to see what was happening, the other gods grabbed her and the sun was restored back to the world.

Kagami biraki means "mirror opening" and to the Japanese symbolizes the opening of the cave and the new restoration of life in the world. At Hombu Dojo, the main headquarters of Aikido, the *mochi* cakes which were presented to the gods on January 1st are broken up and eaten by everyone in celebration of the New Year. Also, a big cask of sake wine is opened up and everyone drinks his fill. This is one of the most important celebrations of the year for the Japanese and the most important celebration among Aikidoists in Hombu Dojo. Many students practice from 11:30pm on December 31st and practice into the New Year. Some students would go up into the mountains for prayer and meditation. It was a tradition for a long time for many students to break the ice and jump into the cold river. These are all acts of purification of the body and spirit and a way to pledge themselves to their training in the New Year.

On New Year's, sake wine and sweet rice cakes are presented to the Founder's spirit. It is a symbol of remembrance during this important occasion and also a way of thanking Nature and all creation. It is a time of celebration and happiness from the ancient times, when the young goddess first lifted up her skirts to entertain the other gods, to this day when we welcome in the New Year. It means, to many people, new life.

In our dojo, we will continue daily practice as usual. We offer rice cakes and sake wine to Infinite Nature. This is symbolized by the scroll written by the Founder himself and presented to Sensei by Doshu in 1969. The scroll reads, "*AME NO MURAKUMO KUKI SAMUHARA RYU O*", which is an obscure

and very ancient term referring to the "Dragon King Protecting and Sustaining the Infinite Vital Energy of the Universe." The scroll is one of the very last written by the Founder before his passing. It is only brought out for New Year's and very important occasions. In the Buddhist tradition, everyone offers incense to the Founder's Memorial Tablet at the head of the dojo. The Memorial Tablet records the Founder's posthumous name which he uses to enter Buddha's Paradise.

The New Year brings new hope and is a time when we can reaffirm our lives in Aikido. The symbols of the New Year in this country are Father Time and the Infant New Year. In Japan, the New Year is symbolized by the bamboo, pine tree and plum blossom. The bamboo represents resiliency and the ability to spring back in the face of any misfortune. The pine symbolizes "evergreen," or long life. It means that we should stay "ever" young in mind and body. The plum blossom is the only flower that blooms in the cold of winter. It means that we must show our best qualities in the hardest times. The symbols of the New Year also represent the essence of our Aikido training.

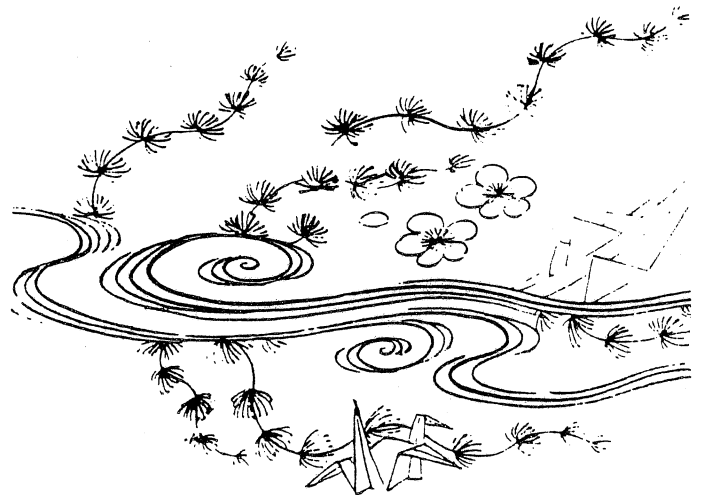
We should also remember that Aikido is not only to make our bodies and hearts strong but to work for peace in the world. We cannot simply yell and scream, "Peace on Earth! Peace on Earth!" It doesn't do any good at all. We must start at the source where Peace is born. That is in our own hearts. When your training finally touches your own heart, then you can say that you have really begun training in Aikido. Until that time, it is only something, like everything else, that we try to exploit and use to our own advantage.

I hope that everyone will take a few minutes of their time during this busy Holiday Season to think about how much Aikido has done for their lives. It is very easy to take something for granted, so the New Year's season is an important time to re-affirm our lives and be thankful for our health and good fortune.

Many centuries ago, before the birth of Christ, a young man lived with his mother deep in the mountains of China. His mother was very ill so the son worked hard every day gathering kindling and selling it to the neighboring villagers. Approaching the New Year, the winter was particularly harsh with heavy snows and bitterly cold winds. His very ill mother felt like eating some bamboo shoots but this was im-

possible because the bamboo shoots never come out in the winter. The son was very much saddened because of this but went out anyways hopelessly trying to find bamboo shoots. The gods felt for this young man and made the bamboo shoots grow in winter. This known as "Moso" bamboo shoots which are the only type of bamboo which grows in winter. They are named after the young man who first found them.

When we think of ourselves or feel sorry for ourselves, we only become more saddened by our plight. When we think of others, we can never give too much and whatever we give is always replaced by something better. The legend says that the gods made the bamboo shoots grow in the winter, but wise men say that it was the boy's faith and desire to help others. For the New Year, we should give up all of our misgivings, hate and selfish desires and become filled with the "ki" of the New Year.



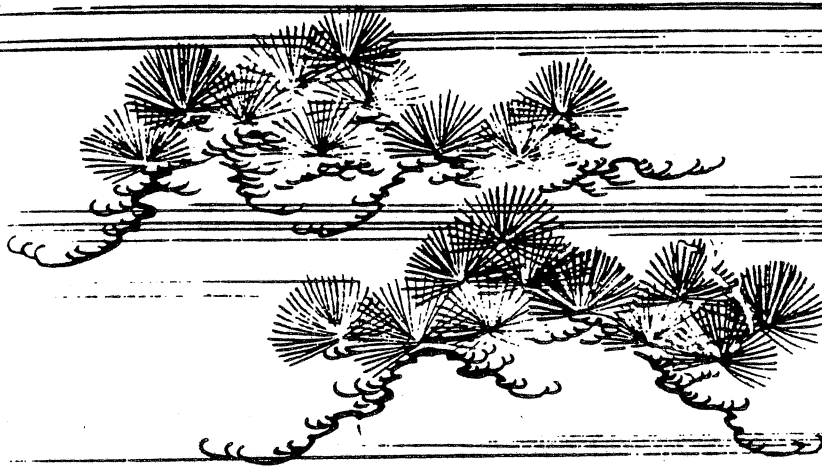
SHOGUN SANTA'S PARADE

On November 22, 1987, the Japanese Village Plaza sponsored the annual Shogun Santa's parade through Little Tokyo with hundreds of children from many community groups around the city, along with the Children's Class of our dojo. It was a great parade which everyone enjoyed and many gifts were passed around afterwards. The following members participated and marched through Little Tokyo in their uniforms.

Malcolm Quon
Christian Rocha

Daniel Rocha
Daphne Yamasaki
Ryoji Yamada
Timi Ito
Mitsuru Yamahata
Shirley Yamahata
Vincent Medina
Keith Medina

Special thanks to the parents of the Sunday Children's Class for their help during the parade and to our classmates, Douglas Firestone, Kathy Heinemann, Mitsuko Yoshimoto, Kaz Nishida and Ron Rocha for their help as well.



· HOUR MAGAZINE SHOW

On November 24 and 25, 1987, the Hour Magazine Show on channel 11 with host Mr. Gary Collins and special guest host, Mr. Dick Cavett was aired throughout the nation. This special Thanksgiving show featured our dojo and an Aikido demonstration by Sensei. It is a special honor for us because martial arts is rarely viewed on national television.

DOJO CHRISTMAS PARTY

On December 12, 1987, we held our Christmas Party at the Far East Cafe in Little Tokyo. About fifteen members attended. Special guests were Sensei's mother who is just recuperating from her illness and an aunt who has been taking care of her. Everyone had a lot to eat with special service from the owners of the Far East Cafe. The menu included won ton soup, almond duck, sweet and sour pork, Chinese style chicken salad, chicken chop suey chow mein, roast duck Cantonese style, barbecued pork, shrimp with mushrooms and baby corn, and Cantonese style lobster on the house. Don't miss next year's Christmas party!

SPECIAL THANKS TO SPECIAL PEOPLE

As the Chief Instructor and Director of the dojo, on behalf of the members, friends and students, I would like to express my thanks to the many people who have helped us out during 1987. Special thanks goes to Ms. Kathy Heinemann and the many students who have contributed generously to our Yellow Pages Ad fund. Several students have made contributions to

the dojo which has helped us out of many tight financial spots throughout the year. Mr. Nels Israelson has often taken out time from his busy schedule to become our "unofficial" dojo photographer. Mr. Rick Cushing has helped with many carpentry tasks and installing the large fan on the third floor which was a very difficult task. Mr. Mark Moore has also contributed his carpentry skills to rebuild the third floor after the earthquake in October. Nisei Florists have donated flowers to O-Sensei throughout the year. Mr. Pat Seki of Seki Jewelers in the Honda Plaza, as always, sponsored our Nisei Week Demonstration. I would also like to thank Ms. Mitsuko Yoshimoto for good press in the US Japanese Business News. A very special thanks goes to Mr. Eric Stout who has done a consistently excellent job in printing our newsletter every month. *[My apologies for the late delivery of January's newsletter!-Eric]* Copies Unlimited on Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood has, as in many years in the past, given us the best service and printed our newsletter on their best copier. I would also like to thank Toyo Printers as well as the Zenshuji Temple in Little Tokyo for all of their support and good will. I am sure there are many more people whom I have failed to mention. Thank you, thank you, everyone!

I would also like to give a special word of thanks to my teaching assistants for their excellent job throughout 1987. They are in order of seniority: Mr. Ben Suyenobu, Mr. Douglas Firestone, Ms. Kathy Heinemann, Mr. Kazuho Nishida and Mr. Brian Reverman. This has been an exceptionally difficult year because of many family illnesses which have taken me away from teaching in the dojo.

I would also like to thank Yamada Yoshimitsu Sensei of the New York Aiki Kai, Kanai Mitsunari Sensei of the New England Aiki Kai, and Sugano Seiichi Sensei of the New York Aiki Kai for conducting wonderful seminars at our dojo in 1987.

Special thanks goes to Mr. Larry Reynosa of the Makoto Dojo in Ventura and Mr. Lance Saegusa of the Seidokan dojo who are the only two Aikidoists in Southern California generous and "brave" enough to attend our seminars in 1987.

Last but not least, a word of thanks to Mr. Dick Cavett of New York who has helped the dojo in a million ways.

not trying to express a sad feeling but a reflection on the temporary nature of life. Please do not misunderstand. With a different name, perhaps I can fool the gods and they may treat me a little better.

TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR 1988.

The daily training remains the same except that we will temporarily cancel the second (7:30pm to 8:30pm) class on Friday evenings. The second class on Mondays through Thursdays will all be considered intermediate to advanced classes. We will be emphasizing staff (jo) and sword (bokken) training in these classes for 1988. Sensei will be teaching at the SFV dojo every Thursday evening. The Saturday classes at the SFV dojo will alternate between



Finally, thanks to all my students who have worked so hard during the year and have made excellent progress in their training and have done so well with their lives. An added prayer for your good health, prosperity and success.

"KANSHU"

Many good things have come in 1987 and we have much to be thankful for. It has been a particularly difficult year for me because suddenly our membership dwindled down and I had many problems with my family's bad health. In the New Year, I am taking another poetic name for myself, Kanshu, which means, "cold and lonely boat." We hope to ride the celestial boat to the "other shore" (paradise); mine, at this time, seems to be a cold and lonely one. I am

Mr. Douglas Firestone, Ms. Kathy Heinemann, Mr. Brian Reverman and Mr. Kazuho Nishida. Mr. Ben Suyenobu will usually be there to act as senior instructor.

We will sponsor three or four seminars this year. We will also feature a lecture series on the philosophy of Aikido and hopefully we will be inviting more guest instructors from local dojos to teach. Sensei will also initiate a special series of lectures and classes in macrobiotic and Zen Buddhist vegetarian cooking for the home and how it relates to Aikido training. These will be conducted in the dojo kitchen. We hope to sponsor lectures in Zen Buddhism, meditation, Tibetan medicine, and accupressure.

NEW MEMBERS

Each and every student should do their best to build up our dojo membership this year. We should reach 150 members by the end of this year. Please help the dojo to grow.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Just before the Christmas Holidays, the student body got together to hold their first meeting. They discussed a number of topics, mainly concerned with how to make the dojo grow and how to manage the dojo better. Sensei has written his comments on the student meeting (please refer to article dated December 25, 1987 distributed in the dojo). He offered his hearty and warmest congratulations and is happy to see greater involvement in the dojo by students.

As a result of the first meeting, several very important matters were discussed and settled. The Saturday training schedule is changed to:

Advanced Class 10:15am to 11:15am

Beginner's Class 11:30am to 12:30pm

This new arrangement allows more students to practice after class and go to lunch together if they wish.

In addition, the monthly dues, by agreement of the students, will be raised from \$50.00 per month to \$60.00 per month. This is the first increase in dues since the opening four years ago. It is the first time the dues have been raised in almost eight years. This is to meet the rising costs of running the dojo.

Student meetings will be held once a month and will be arranged by the students in charge. Sensei will not be in attendance during these meetings. In addition, the Yudansha-kai, consisting of all black belt holders in the dojo, will also meet once a month but discussion is primarily focused on instruction and class scheduling. Students are urged to attend these student meetings and become involved and express their opinions. The meetings are open to all students and members.

NEW YEAR'S PROMOTIONS

In celebration of the New Year, the following students have been promoted:

5th Kyu
Mr. Brigido Anaya
Mr. David Schweizer

4th Kyu
Mr. David Perry

3rd Kyu
Mr. Mark Moore
Mr. Yasushi Matsuki

2nd Kyu
Mr. Richard Eloriagga
Mr. Ron Hill
Dr. Issac English

1st Kyu
Dr. Michael Albertson

Candidates for Shodan Test on January 24, 1988.

Mr. Victor Rodriguez
Mr. Blake Ashley

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



OUR NEWSLETTER

Our Newsletter is becoming well known and now we have interested individuals from Czechoslovakia, Australia and the West Indies who are requesting subscriptions. Students who are interested in contributing articles about Aikido or the dojo or Aikido-related news items or art work are more than welcome to submit their articles. Please submit your article by the 15th of each month for the following month's issue.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Free to active members.

\$10.00 per year for non-members.

1988 DOJO RATES

Students (adults) \$ 60.00 per month.

Children \$ 28.00 per month.

Family Rates Available.

First month \$ 25.00 initiation fee plus first month.

Annual rate until Feb. 1 \$500.00

Annual rate after Feb. 1 \$650.00

Uniforms \$ 35.00 (adult sizes). Children sizes are less.

Dojo Patches \$ 5.00

Dojo Pens \$ 5.00

Students and friends may make donations to the dojo by making their checks payable to: The Aikido Center of Los Angeles. Please include your name, address and telephone number.

We have received many donations through 1987 to help our dojo along. The Chief Instructor and all the members of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles wish to express their warmest thanks for your friendship and generosity and encouragement of our training. Thank you and please enjoy all of the best of the New Year, 1988.

