

AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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March 1, 1988

OUR FIRST OPEN HOUSE

On February 14th, the members of the dojo conducted the first Open House since our Grand Opening three years ago. This is the first project of the newly formed Nantenkai and it was a big success as everyone agrees. Over one hundred people visited the dojo throughout the day. This is a significant number because our fete coincided with Valentine's Day, the Washington birthday holiday weekend and the Chinese New Year's Festival in Chinatown which blocked off a considerable amount of incoming traffic.

All the members provided a wonderful and tasty banquet outside while inside there were continuous videos playing on Aikido demonstrations by various masters including O-Sensei and Doshu. Various dojo instructors gave class demonstrations and Sensei conducted a few demonstrations and questions and answer periods. It was a great deal of work for everyone any everyone was completely exhausted by the end of the day. Everyone had a great time.

SENTA YAMADA SENSEI VISITS DOJO FROM FUKUOKA, JAPAN

On February 7th, Senta Yamada Sensei, 6th dan in Aikido and 6th dan in Judo conducted a special class from 10:00am to after 12:00 pm as a special Sunday class. He brought several of his students from England and Sweden and one young American lady who has spent the last 12 years living and studying in Japan.

Senta Yamada Sensei was originally a Judo student who went to study Aikido under the Founder, O-Sensei, after the War in Wakayama, Japan (O-Sensei's birthplace). He later studied under Kenji Tomiki Sensei who was a well known Judo exponent sent by the founder of Judo, Jigoro Kano Sensei, to learn Aikido under the Founder. Tomiki Sensei later developed Tomiki Aikido which combines Aikido and Judo technique and

advocates competition. Opposed to the introduction of competition into Aikido, Yamada Sensei left for England to develop Aikido there. He spent a number of years there before his retirement and wrote, "The Ancient Secrets of Aikido" and the "Theory and Practice of Aikido."

Yamada Sensei demonstrated basic hand and foot movements in Tomiki Aikido and demonstrated a few Aikido techniques after a lengthy 45 minute explanation of his background. He then utilized the last portion of the class to demonstrate early Judo forms (kata) and his student performed one Japanese dance. Ms Megan Reisal of the Second Wind Dojo was our special guest who participated in the class and interviewed Yamada Sensei after the class for the Aikido Today newsletter.

Yamada Sensei has travelled all over the world many times visiting many dojos. He is very concerned with the future growth of martial arts and Aikido in this society today. Be the world is changing so rapidly, he believes, the martial arts will soon lose its meaning and perhaps society will lose an important and necessary discipline to preserve what is left of its humanity.

He states that martial arts in many parts of the world are not doing well because of so much disharmony and in-fighting and politics. He believes that they have lost their spirit and discipline. He observes that many instructors are too concerned with becoming a celebrity or becoming famous in the movies. He stated that he was quite surprised to find our dojo because martial arts on the West Coast has a very bad international reputation. He says the atmosphere and spirit of the dojo is very good and the discipline and courtesy of the students is excellent. He came to the dojo many times to chat and have tea.

Yamada Sensei is planning to visit the San Francisco area before his return to Japan at the end of February.

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Yamada Sensei will be visiting Doshu at the Aikido World Headquarters before his return to Fukuoka, his home town. He then plans to travel to Nepal and Tibet.

TWO NEW BLACK BELTS

On January 24th, Mr. Blake Ashley and Mr. Victor Rodriguez passed their examination qualifying them to the rank of Shodan of first degree black belt. Mr. Blake Ashley is an old student from the Hollywood dojo.

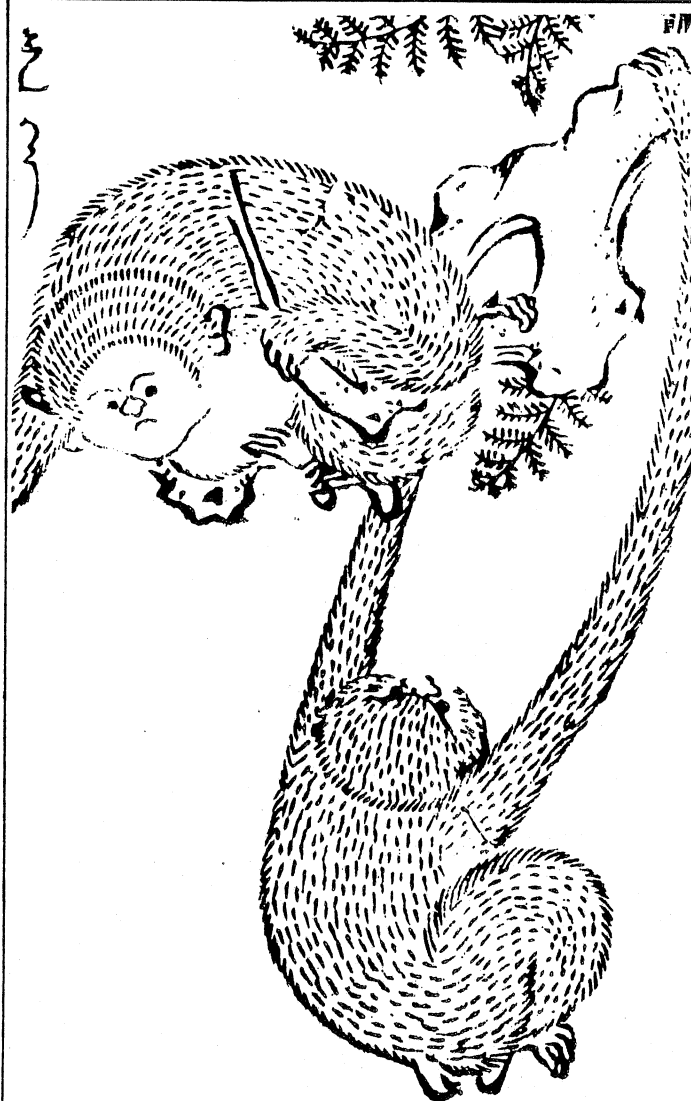
The Yudansha-kai held a small party for them welcoming them into our Black Belt Committee. The party was held at the Chandara Restaurant after second class on Tuesday, February 16th. A great party was held for them by the general membership on Saturday, February 20th, at Bill Heath's home in Glendale.

IMPORTANT SEMINAR ON MARCH 19th by YAMADA YOSHIMITSU SENSEI FROM NEW YORK

Yamada Sensei, 7th dan and Chief Instructor of the New York Aiki Kai will be conducting another important seminar at our dojo on Saturday, March 19th. There will be two classes at 1:00pm to 2:00pm and 2:15pm to 3:15pm. Everyone is encouraged to mark their calendars and attend. Yamada Sensei has visited us several times before and it is always nice to have him come. He rarely comes to Los Angeles.

Yamada Sensei came to New York over 25 years ago and now maintains one of the largest and oldest dojos in the United States today. He is the creator of the United States Aikido Federation and is one of the pioneers of American Aikido. He has also contributed greatly to expand Hombu Dojo and develop the International Aikido Federation. Yamada Sensei is probably the most important Aikido instructor in this country today and we should feel honored that he takes time from his busy schedule to visit us.

Yamada Sensei will only be teaching one day on Saturday. There will be a Welcome Party for him in the evening.



"MONKEY SHINES" REACHING THE BOTTOMLESS TOP
In Japan, there is a very unusual species of monkey. This monkey was immortalized in many paintings by the artist Mori Sosen in the 18th century. This monkey has long, rather fine fur but his face and very bulbous bottom is quite brightly red.

As in all monkey (as well as human) societies, there is always one who must climb to the very top of the tree to show off his leadership or superiority over the other members of the clan.

There is an old saying in Japan. "As the monkey climbs to the very top of the tree to claim his leadership and show off his

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pride, all he does in effect is to show off his funny red ass for everyone to see." This is so true in the human world as well. The higher up the ladder we try to climb, the more chances we have of making complete and utter fools of ourselves.

We believe that the higher up we climb the greater security we have. But often, that is not the case. Another Japanese saying is, "even monkeys fall out of trees." The Aikidoist strive to perfect his art and understand the principles of Aikido in his daily life. It is not so important for the Aikidoist to become the best, the strongest or the most famous. The true Aikidoist is happy wherever he is.

We always say, "The sky's the limit." My grandmother always said, "Don't put your nose up in the air. Looking at the sky, you see no limit and you will never be satisfied with anything. Bow your head towards the ground and make sure of every step you take." It is human nature, I think, to look higher and higher. But how many of us spend our lives with our feet 12 inches above the ground?

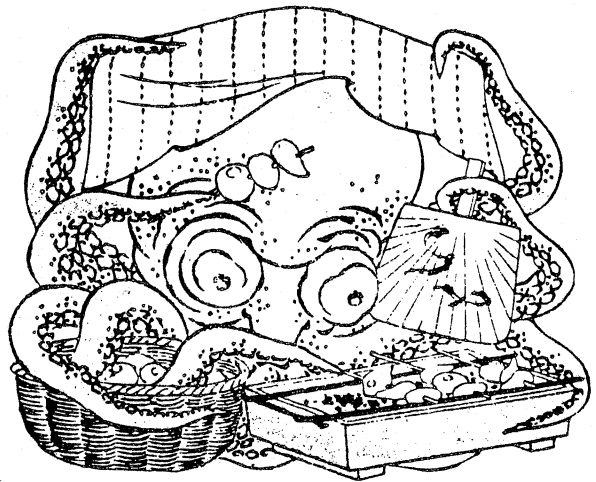
In Aikido, we always say to maintain your center and keep good posture. This is the way we keep our feet on the ground.

THE CLEVER OCTOPUS!

Octopus or "tako" in Japanese is quite a delicacy in Japan. It is not such a rare or expensive food but it is quite delicious. I love freshly prepared "tako no sashimi" with a sauce of miso, sweet wine and ground sesame seeds.

The tako is very smart and not easy to catch. In the water, it can swim very fast, and when it wants to, it is almost impossible to pry away from a rock. But the Japanese catch the clever tako very easily. The fisherman lowers a large jar into the water and lets rest at the bottom of the sea over night. The tako sees the jar and thinks that it is a smart place to sleep and crawls inside, sleeping asleep thinking that it is safe and sound. In the morning the fishermen bring up the jar with the tako inside

and save him for dinner. What a surprise for the poor tako. Human beings are the same way. What they think is the best for themselves may often turn out to be quite dangerous. In our daily lives, we cannot often avoid such traps. Perhaps, we fall into them constantly without even being aware of it. Even if we are careful, it is sometimes impossible to avoid. One reason for falling into such traps is our egos which are never satisfied and our pride which blinds us to the world. If the tako was content with his old home, perhaps he would not always be looking for a better place to live. Maybe if the tako was less greedy, they would be harder to catch and it wouldn't be so easy to enjoy eating tako with miso sauce in the restaurants any-more.



"AN ORDINARY PERSON, AN ORDINARY SANGHA"

This is an article written by Tozen Akiyama Sensei, the resident priest of the Milwaukee Zen Center, which appeared in the Milwaukee Zen Center Newsletter (Volume 3 Number 1, January, 1988). (Note: Sangha refers to the lay membership of the Zen center.)

When I visited a temple near Tokyo for the first time to sit zazen as a layperson, the abbot asked me, "Does your wife look like the Buddha?" The question was so sudden that I was surprised and answered, "My wife looks like a demon." The abbot replied, "It's too bad. Families sometimes say, 'Our husband/father would be wonderful if only he didn't practice zazen,' or associates at work say, 'No wonder his is strange,' or 'No wonder he quarrels. He practices zazen.' Zazen is not something like that, you know. . . ."

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I used to go overnight zazen every weekend and to Monday evening sitting, but my wife and daughter never complained that I practiced zazen. Our relationships were not especially good or bad. We were an average Japanese family, sometimes quarreling but usually getting along well. The abbot's question was so sudden and unexpected that I, half jokingly and half to hide my embarrassment, answered that my wife looked like a demon although she did not look like that. However, it was true that I had never thought my wife should ever look like the Buddha. The abbot's question was a good teaching for me.

The abbot's second comment also destroyed my presence of mind. My ideas often differed from my associates' ideas and I argued with them, leaving a soreness between us. The point was not whether I was right or wrong but that I did not settle affairs amiably whereas I sat zazen peacefully at temples. I wonder whether my colleagues thought that I quarreled because I practiced zazen or in spite of my practicing zazen. I was certainly practicing zazen my own way or zazen to satisfy my small self and it was far from practicing zazen with all sentient beings.

It is good that we gain confidence in ourselves because we sit zazen, but it is no good to be self-important and convinced that we are always right or to be critical of others or quarrel with others as a result of doing zazen. We should rather not practice than behave in this manner. Some Japanese Zen priests say that they do not like those who practice zazen since zazen practitioners "smack of zazen." I do not take them so seriously because most of them seem to say this as an excuse for not doing zazen themselves; but at the same time I agree with them a bit because we can become self-righteous or complacent if we practice zazen only to satisfy ourselves.

Zen is nothing special. It is not to be outstanding, but to be an ordinary person, to be just right wherever we are. In order to be just right wherever we are, we must accept everyone, everything, and every circumstance as they are. Whomever, whatever

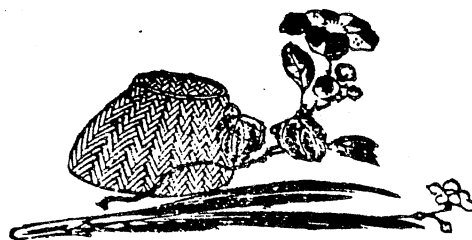
and whichever circumstances we meet are the self. There is no friction or discord at home, at work, among friends, and in the sangha. I feel natural, others feel natural and none of us even feels that we feel natural. We are just right as we are. This is an ordinary person.

I know that I cannot brag. My wife does not look like the Buddha yet. I sometimes quarrel with her and others. It is not easy to get along with everyone. There are many kinds of people with many different ideas, and we may need to do what we believe in sometimes even if we offend others. However, we should not forget to consider whether there is anything wrong with ourselves when we are at odds with others. Whether we are right or they are right, we should not leave an unpleasant feeling between us.

This is the third New Year since I have come to Milwaukee. I am pleased that our Zen Center is growing steadily. I do not like rapid growth. It is better to grow slowly because we can keep our feet on the ground as we go ahead. The Milwaukee Zen Center does not have to be an outstanding Zen Center, but an ordinary Zen Center. However the larger the membership the harder it is to get along well. Let us try to be ordinary people wherever we are in our daily lives and also make our Zen Center an ordinary sangha where everyone feels at home and comfortable.

Tozen Akiyama - Resident Priest

Note: Akiyama Sensei will be in Los Angeles lecturing at the Zenshuji Soto Mission near the dojo on July 23, 1988 from 10:00am. There will be a \$10.00 donation.



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SOY SAUCE AND FISH

This article is taken from the Harvard Medical School Health Journal, Volume 13, Number 4, February, 1988)

Our article on nitrates and cancer (June 1987) mentioned that "some types of preserved fish and certain varieties of Japanese soy sauce" are among the foodstuffs containing substances that favor formation of nitrosamines. Nitrosamines have been implicated in carcinogenesis, and it has been suggested that a high dietary exposure to them might promote cancer of the stomach (which is increasingly rare in the United States, but very common in Japan). It has also been suggested that their formation from nitrites can be inhibited by the actions of vitamin C and vitamin E.

Several readers, understandably, wrote to ask which soy sauces and fish have this characteristic. In the case of soy sauces, we don't know. The Japanese researchers who reported the finding identified the products they studied only by country and state of origin. Several soy sauces produced in the state of Chiba, Japan, and one from the state of Mie, converted nitrite to nitrosamine at a high rate, and the resulting material had a high score on a laboratory test of bacterial mutation (a version of the Ames test), which is believed to correlate with carcinogenic potential. Soy sauces produced in other Japanese states and Hawaii, and most produced in the United States, yielded less nitrosamine and had much lower scores. One exception, from Wisconsin, was very high on both counts. But it was only identified as "soy sauce M."

The investigators of preserved fish were more specific. They identified several types of fish that, after treatment with nitrite under conditions that simulated those in the stomach, produced nitrosamines and caused bacterial mutations. The Japanese varieties sarma, aji and iwashi were associated with the highest rates of genetic change. Other more familiar kinds of fish—such as cod, haddock, bluegill and canned sardines—demonstrated low to moderate

activity, while flounder and catfish showed none. Their results suggest that one reason for a higher rate of stomach cancer among the Japanese is a diet that is periodically low in vitamin C and vitamin E sources, but constantly high in fish species prone to form nitrosamines after they have been preserved with nitrate-containing crude salt or saltpeter.

(Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA, May 1983, pp. 2912-2916, and Seminars on Oncology, September, 1983, pp. 330-341.)

NEWS ITEMS AND IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Annual East Coast Summer Camp will be held from August 12th through August 19th this year at the Roger Williams College in Bristol, Rhode Island.

This year, the special guest instructor is Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, 9th dan.

The following is from a letter from Kanai Sensei, Chief Instructor of the New England Aikikai, dated February 1, 1988.

"Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, 9th dan, was one of O-Sensei's earliest students. He was made Assistant to Waka Sensei (the present Doshu) more than forty years ago, and ever since has been a mainstay at Headquarters. With his support of the present Waka Sensei he has served three generations of the Ueshiba Family.

For years, I have wanted to bring this exceptional teacher to summer camp. This year, at last, it is my great pleasure to announce that Osawa Sensei, 9th dan, of Hombu Dojo will be our honored guest for the week of Summer Camp.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of this rare opportunity. . . ."

Note: Sensei can get a good rate on round trip ticket from Saito Travel from Mr. Masaji Saito. Telephone number: 627-9254. All students are encouraged to go. This is indeed a very rare opportunity.

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Our dojo lecture will begin in March, 1988, this month. This study group is open to all interested students of all dojos. It will be designed to help us better understand and discuss the philosophy, practice and roots of Aikido as well as related topics of interest.

March 7, 1988

"Daily Practice, the Way to Perfection" & "Mastering Mind, Cultivating Technique" from The Spirit of Aikido by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Kodansha Press. pp. 51-83.

March 21, 1988

"Zen and Swordsmanship I" from Zen and Japanese Culture by D. T. Suzuki, Bollingen Press. pp. 89-136.

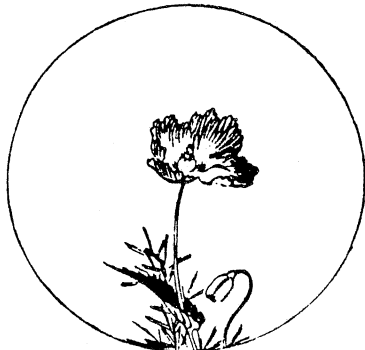
In April, a lecture and demonstration on the proper care and cleaning of the Japanese sword will be the main feature.



On February 12, 1988, Sensei was elected to the post of President of the Southern California Sword Society which meets every 2nd Friday evening in East Los Angeles.

Sensei was interviewed by AsiAm Magazine and will be featured in their Health and Fitness issue.

Sensei's article on "Flaws in Japanese Swords and How to Recognize Them" will be the main article in the Sword Society of the United States in the March-April issue.



PROMOTIONS

The following promotions were made on January 24, 1988 to the members of our Iaido group.

SHODAN

Ms. Kathy Heinemann

1st KYU

Mr. Kevin Altieri

5th KYU

Mr. Gilbert Yamabayashi

6th KYU

Mr. Rene Velasquez

Mr. Hiroshi Abe

The following promotions are made as of February 20, 1988 to the members of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

6th KYU

Mr. Kelly Sands

Mr. Brad Radar

Mr. Lee Hart

WORDS OF WISDOM

From The One Straw Revolution by Masanobu Fukuoka. pp. 110.

"Extravagance of desire is the fundamental cause which has led the world into its present predicament."

"Fast rather than slow, more rather than less—this flashy 'development' is linked directly to society's impending collapse. It has only served to separate man from nature. Humanity must stop indulging the desire for material possessions and personal gain and move instead toward spiritual awareness."

A FEW WORDS FROM SENSEI

We had our first Open House in February and I think this is a historical moment for our dojo. This is the first project of the Nantenkai which is made up of all of our members. The Open House was a major success. As the teacher, I did nothing except to demonstrate a few times and answer a few questions. The students did all the

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work. Although I consider it a big success we did not get a single student despite the many people who attended the fete. Maybe, in that sense, it was not such a success but as for myself, it was wonderful to see everyone working so hard and so well together. To me, this is worth a hundred new students at least. I hope no one is disappointed and appreciate that we accomplished a much greater goal. This is what makes teaching Aikido all worth while.

It is not necessary to become rich or famous as long as we can continue to work and learn together with everyone contributing to each other's growth and enrichment.

We often have many visitors and instructors from all over the world come to our dojo. Whenever they practice here and visit with my students they always compliment me and tell me that they wish they had a dojo like ours. Many people say that they have never seen such a beautiful school. At the same time, my students are always anxious to visit other dojos in the area to see if they can find something more interesting or better. We always like to say that it is just curiosity but it usually stems from discontentment. It is often said that "the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence."

I think it is easy to count the blessings of others but it seems tough to count our own blessings. I don't know why this is so.

I myself am very happy with my dojo and the work of teaching my students. It may not be much of an accomplishment to other people but it is very tough for me. I never imagined how much work it could be but I am still quite content and count my blessings everyday.

Blessings are always mixed, I believe. There is an old story of a poor elderly couple many hundreds of years ago. One day, they were visited by a beautiful angel who promised them riches and good fortune if she could be allowed to live with them. They were, of course, very happy to have her in their home and welcomed her with open

arms. But, the angel said, "There is one condition. I can only live here if you allow my sister to live here too. She will come tomorrow evening and you can answer us then." When the next evening came, the old couple were most anxiously awaiting the arrival of the sister wondering what she could offer them as well in return for lodging.

After a while, an old hag appeared at their door. "I am the sister, she said, "and I bring sickness, poverty and death. I go wherever my sister goes. Will you allow us both to stay?"

Aikido is hard work. But, it is fun as well. We cannot and should not pick and choose what we like and don't like about our practice. Many people do this. We must accept everything about our practice because this is the only way to open ourselves up to new experiences.

Riches and fame are married to poverty and death. They cannot live without each other. We really have no choice in the matter, do we?

Aikido practice makes us strong to endure the hardships in life and enjoy what we find enjoyable. Whether we are in heaven or hell, the true Aikidoist is always content and always happy.

In the tea ceremony, we use a ladle called a "shaku" to pour the hot water into the bowl to prepare the tea and we also use it to pour cold water into the bowl to clean it afterwards. The ladle is considered to represent the ideal of the tea-man. Indeed it is the ideal of Aikidoists as well.

Sen no Rikyu, the founder of the tea ceremony in Japan wrote a poem about the ladle which is roughly translated as:

"The humble ladle moving from hot water to very cold water, yet never complains and is always content." We should move from heaven and hell just as the ladle moves from hot to cold water.

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NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

Unfortunately, we will not be able to send out our newsletter to our many friends as we have been doing in the past. Our dojo finances have become so tight that we can no longer afford this luxury. Those who wish to continue receiving our newsletter can make a donation to the dojo if they wish or become a member of the dojo.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

We still need to build up our membership in order to survive. All members should try their best to bring in new students.

DOJO PATCHES

Mr. Blake Ashley is handling the ordering of new dojo patches. We must collect the money before we can place our order so please see Blake about your new patch. Thank you.

NEW ENGLAND SUMMER CAMP

Those who are interested in attending should see Sensei right away. A restricted non-refundable round trip flight from LA to Boston is \$280.50 (TWA) and \$310.50 (United). Reminder: This year's special guest instructor is Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, 9th dan.

FINAL REMINDER

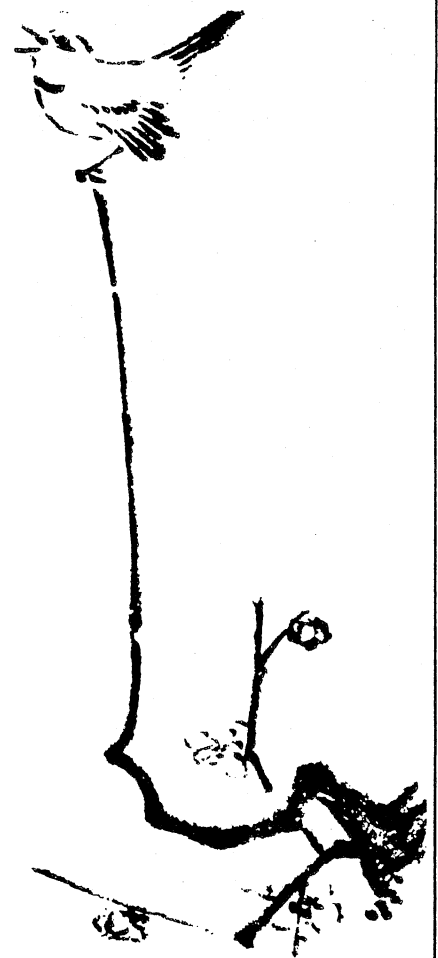
Yamada Sensei from New York will be conducting a seminar at our dojo on March 19th. Please mark your calendars and participate by all means. It is very difficult to get these instructors to come to visit us and students should take advantage when they do come to learn from them. Yamada Sensei is an excellent teacher and has done a great deal for our dojo.

We do not have much participation from other dojos to support our seminars so it is up to our own membership to participate and make them a success. These seminars are excellent and valuable aspect of our practice. Everyone is urged to attend.

We are also planning a Welcome Party for Yamada Sensei.

Iaido STUDENTS:

The dojo has ordered sword cleaning kits in the wood box, training swords and Iaido belts. Those who need any of these should see Sensei right away. We have five swords coming and they are very difficult to order. Please reserve one if you wish to have one.



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QUESTIONS FROM THE STUDENTS:

Is Aikido a Cult?

Recently, a student brought me a clipping from a book which his father often refers to in his profession as a minister. The book is entitled: "Larson's Book of Cults" by Bob Larson (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois).

This is the opening paragraph of Larson's definition of Aikido on page 298 of the above referenced book:

AIKIDO

This martial art is the most overtly religious. Literally, it means "road" (do) to a union" (ai) with the "universal spirit" (ki). It was founded by Morihei Ueshiba who became concerned that he couldn't control his strength without controlling his mind. Ultimately, after entering many temples he arrived at "enlightenment" and viewed himself, in the Buddhist theological concept, as "at one with the universe." At that moment, he declared, "The fundamental principle of the martial arts is God's love and universal love. The true martial arts," (sic) he said, regulates ki of the universe."

I am not exactly certain of the intention of this author but the book is used as a reference to "warn" ministers and parishioners alike of the many "religious" disciplines or "cults" which may offend Christians. I think the assumption is: if Aikido is not a religion but "overtly religious," then it must be a cult (in the negative sense of the word.) One may also understand that, if Aikido speaks of God but is not recognized by any branch of the church of Christ, then it must be a cult. I think the term, "cult" is defined, in their sense, as a pseudo-religion or something which may border dangerously on the edge of heresy by using "God's name in vain."

O-Sensei, the Founder of Aikido, often spoke of God and nature with a capital "N." I am quite certain that he did not have the intention to create a religion or offend the Christian "God." O-Sensei was more

concerned with cultivating the individual, world peace and his own training. He was not particularly interested in religious or theological debate. O-Sensei's spiritual teacher was Deguchi Onisaburo (among many) who inherited the leadership of the Omoto-kyo religion. The Omoto-kyo is theologically based on the Genesis of the Old Testament. Its ceremonies are conducted in the manner of Shinto and its concepts are expressed in largely Buddhist terminology. It may be from the Omoto-kyo that O-Sensei understood the world and all creation to be the work of one "God." However, it is hard to conceive that O-Sensei was concerned with or attempted to distinguish the differing religious roots. From a general point of view, the creation of the world in the Genesis and the legend of the creation of the world in the Kojiki, the most important in Shinto, sound very much the same.

One sees temples and shrines everywhere when one goes to Japan. This has led many people to believe that the Japanese are an extremely religious people. And, on every important occasion and holiday, they seem to be on their way to a temple or shrine of some sort to pray.

But opinions vary. Donald Ritchie has spent over thirty years in Japan and has written over a dozen books on the Japanese people. He is considered one of the foremost authorities on Japan today. In his famous travelogue, he writes: "I know of no people more lacking the religious sense than they (Japanese). . . ." "Not only have they never been religious, they have never felt the need to be."

It is difficult to conclude if the Japanese people are "overtly religious" or not religious as it is difficult to conclude with any other nation or people.

This conflicting opinion regarding the religious consciousness of the Japanese people is evident to many people who have gone to Japan.

It is difficult to understand why parents send their children to private Catholic schools, marry in a Shinto ceremony and be buried as Buddhists. It is difficult to

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understand why even many Buddhists in Japan celebrate Christmas and exchange gifts. Many Japanese, although a people of one of the most advanced nations in the world, still worship the centuries old marriage of two rocks and still may not conclude a billion dollar business deal if it happens to fall on an unlucky day.

Ritchie's observation is an acutely interesting one. The Japanese, in general, do not seem to be concerned with theological contradiction and, odd as it may seem, freely incorporate into their personal lives whatever religion or religious belief they deem necessary, suitable or profitable. They do not seem to be worried about any consequence or divine punishment from celebrating both Christmas and Hanamatsuri (Buddha's birthday) on their appropriate days.

The Japanese send their children to private Catholic schools because of their very good reputation. Shinto weddings are auspicious and Buddhist funerals are lengthy and beautiful. And, everyone loves Christmas. Several years ago, some American tourists were shocked to find that a big, well-known department store in downtown Tokyo hung a huge Santa Claus on the side of their building in celebration of Easter!

I quite believe O-Sensei was a deeply religious person but I don't think he made such careful distinctions between what is religion and his personal life as we do today. There was no "separation of church and state" in his life as we know it today. O-Sensei never considered Aikido a religion or a cult and never meant it to be. He seemed to borrow from all sources of wisdom, religious or philosophical, to develop his art and finally perfect it. This is not unique to O-Sensei but a common and natural part of the Japanese psychology.

"Shukyo" the Japanese word for religion did not come into popular use until the age of Japan's modernization and Westernization.

"Kokka" or the Japanese word for "nation" also fits into this category. The Japanese did not look at themselves as a "nation" until they began to deal with Western nations.

In imitation of the West, they began to look at religions collectively and make various distinctions of orthodoxy or theology.

We, in the West, try so hard to achieve the "separation of the church and state" to insure our religious freedom. We don't pray in the schools but now we don't know what to do if a preacher may become the President of the United States. Oddly, our religious freedom seems only to include Christianity. It may be for this reason books are written to warn us of dangerous "cults" which may infect and harm us. In the February 19, 1988 issue of the Rafu Shimpo, a local Japanese American newspaper a letter was printed from Reverend Howard Lee Kilby who protests that he was not allowed to teach a course of Zen Buddhism at the Garland County Community College although a minister was permitted to teach a course on "understanding the Bible" and a Rabbi was allowed to teach a course on the Old Testament. This incident took place in Garland County, Arkansas last month!

It is especially unwise to become in a religious debate because we are an Aikido dojo and only an Aikido dojo. I do feel an obligation to clarify, as best I can, the question of my student and therefore I made this rebuttal to Larson's Book of Cults. I don't consider Aikido "overtly religious." This is inaccurate and misrepresents Aikido to the American public, I believe. I believe the East looks at religion in a very different way from the West and that is the source of the misunderstanding. On the contrary, I find our "religious freedom" quite intolerant of Eastern ideas in this country. It is changing rapidly but its source seems to lie deeply somewhere in our culture.

When we discuss O-Sensei's religious "fervor," I believe we should appreciate his great desire to urge us to find "God"

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within ourselves, Whoever and from wherever
He may come.

I hope people will not look at Aikido as a
"cult" or religion. I do believe that a
student can find religion in Aikido if he
seeks it. He can also find a social outlet
in Aikido if he seeks it. If he is looking
for self-defense, he can find that as well.

I was born a Buddhist but raised as a Presby-
terian and practice Zen by personal prefer-
ence. For myself, Aikido has had such a
profound effect on my life, I consider that
effect as almost a "religious" experience.
But, I never teach Aikido as a religion.
Much of Aikido is what we come to experience
and understand for ourselves.

I do believe that the individual may find
God through Aikido if that is what he is
seeking. But, who that God is, I don't
know. I only know that he represents all
that is good, wholesome and humane in this
world and that is what Aikido is seeking
as well. Although we may call this "religi-
ous" in the West, in the East it is called
an important part of life itself. In the
final analysis, however, as I see what is
going on in this world today, we need much
more Aikido if Aikido can recover our human-
ity and this is good regardless of the name
we give it.

Note: I hope this article does not offend
anyone because that is not the intention of
this article. This article does not advo-
cate any religion over the other. We seemed
to have divorced religion from our lives and
somehow fear it. As I have said many times
before, Aikido is not a religion but perhaps
it may lead some people back to it.

Erratum: Page 9. Donald Ritchie's
famous travelogue is entitled: Inland Sea,
Weatherhill Press.

TRAINING SCHEDULE:

The Following is the current training
schedule for the dojo effective as of
January 1, 1988. Please note several
changes in the Advanced Class schedule.

BEGINNING CLASSES

Monday-Wednesday-Friday	7:00am-8:00am
Monday thru Friday	6:15pm-7:15pm
Thursday	7:30pm-8:30pm

ADVANCED CLASSES

Tuesday	7:30pm-8:30pm
Saturday	10:15am-11:15am

WEAPONS CLASSES

Monday	7:30pm-8:30pm
Wednesday	7:30pm-8:30pm

CHILDREN'S CLASS

Sunday	12:00pm-1:00pm
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MUSOSHINDEN RYU IAIDO

Monday	8:45pm-9:45pm
Wednesday	8:45pm-9:45pm
Saturday	9:00am-10:00am
Sunday	9:00am-10:00am

The Yudansha-kai (Black Belt Committee meets
on the first Saturday of every month after
the second class at 12:45pm.

The Nantenkai (General Membership Committee)
meets according to the current schedule
which will be posted on the bulletin board.

MONTHLY DUES

Adults	\$60.00 per month.
Children	\$27.00 per month

Family Rates Available.

There is a \$25.00 initiation fee for the
first month. There are no refunds.