



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

NEWSLETTER

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Volume 5. Numbers 5 & 6.
May & June, 1990

TO BE DISCOURAGED IS A PART OF TRAINING

Rev. Kensho Furuya

Everyone gets discouraged in their training at one point or another. As a matter of fact, the longer we train, the more dark periods of failure, discouragement and frustration we can remember surviving. Through the years however, we learn to resolve ourselves to it and manage to continue going somehow one step at a time. Beginning students, however, quit easily when they meet their first obstacle or soon lose interest when the training becomes too hard or they find they cannot catch on to Aikido practice as easily as they thought. I have often seen teachers, even after twenty or thirty years of training, finally become disappointed and quit.

In our martial arts training, we understand that "quitting means defeat" but why does this feeling come up in ourselves and why is it so uncontrollable? Why do we become so frustrated in our training? Why do we reach plateaus? Why do we stop progressing? Why does suddenly everything become meaningless? I am sure, like myself, we all ask ourselves these questions at one time or another.

Some time ago, in another article, I wrote that through Aikido training we can achieve happiness. Shortly thereafter, one of my students came up to me and said, "Sensei, you wrote that we can be happy through Aikido training but sometimes I see that you are not happy. I train very hard but sometimes I am not happy too."

"You don't understand what true happiness is," I replied.

We create ideal situations for ourselves in our minds and when events go contrary to our expectations, we become discouraged. We imagine that we have the right to be happy or we deserve to be happy so any condition contrary or outside of this condition is not a part of our lives. We think that when we are happy, we are living our "true" lives and when we are not happy, something from the "outside" is interfering with ourselves.

In martial arts, we realize that both happiness and un-

are a part of our lives. We train to accept both equally. Of course, if we had a choice between the two, we would take happiness like everyone else. But, unfortunately, we cannot choose between the two. Indeed, it seems as though we experience more unhappiness than happiness in our lives.

When we are making good progress in our training, we are quite proud of ourselves. When we begin to slow down, when the techniques don't work quite right, when art doesn't seem to make sense anymore, we become discouraged and think about quitting or looking for another martial art.

Our success is a part of our lives, but our failures and disappointments are a part of our lives as well. As precious and unique aspects of our individual lives, we should accept both equally as a fundamental aspect of our martial arts training.

Of course, when things go badly, we complain like the other person but it doesn't mean that it is something outside of our own lives which is bothering us. We take notice of it only because it is something that we discriminate between. In martial arts, we cannot discriminate, just as we cannot choose our opponents or the circumstances of the encounter. And, in dealing with the opponent, we are often working at some disadvantage which we overcome by virtue of our training and technique. This is what makes martial arts so interesting. The same can be said of life as well, we survive day by day, overcoming adversity and using our skill and personal power to slowly but both surely reach our goals and aspirations. The energy we use can be called, "the power of life." In whatever job we have, however dull and meaningless or however fine and distinguished, we accept everything with the same mind. A true martial artist cannot spiritually or mentally jump from happiness to depression so easily. This is the essence of our training. This is also what makes martial arts training so difficult at times. A visitor came to my dojo one day and was so impressed the building, number of students and how well they were training, etc. He said, "You must be very successful." "No," I replied, "This dojo was built, not on success, but on so many failures. But, by hanging in there, we have managed to come this far. I am so grateful."

A dying man became very distraught and asked the advice of the Zen Master Ryokan. Ryokan advised him,

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of the Zen master Ryokan. Ryokan advised him, "When you are alive, it's okay to be alive. When you are sick, it's okay to be sick and you are dying, it's okay to die.

When we are discouraged with our training, there is nothing wrong with being discouraged, it is only another part of our training. The important point is to not misunderstand it and quit in discouragement but to keep training just as before. After a while, we find that there was no reason to be discouraged with ourselves at all.

Reverend Kensho Furuya,
Resident Chief Instructor

CHILDREN'S DAY DEMONSTRATION MAY 5, 1990

In 101 degree temperatures, Mr. Douglas Firestone and members of the dojo gave a great demonstration for the Children's Day Festival held at the Japanese Village Plaza on May 5, 1990. This is a demonstration which the dojo holds every year. The Children's Day Festival is a combination of the traditional Japanese festival of Girl's Day on March 3rd and Boy's Day on May 5th. Thanks for demonstrating on such a hot day! The following students participated:

Children's Day Demonstration:

Mr. Kaz Nishida
Mr. Jim Graves
Ms. Mitsuko Yoshimoto
Mr. Yasushi Matsuki
Mr. Steve Stephanides
Mr. Sukkoo Lee
Mr. Gary Myers (Iaido)
Mr. Ken Watanabe
Mr. Mark Moore
Mr. William Gillespie
Mr. James Sims
Mr. Kenny Furuya
Mr. Kevin Kawa
Mr. Jonas Youngstrom
Mr. Gabriel Youngstrom

YAMADA SENSEI TEACHES AT ACLA

Mr. Jim Graves, 2nd Dan

Yoshimitsu Yamada Sensei, 8th Dan, Chief Instructor of the New York Aikikai, recently visited our dojo. En route to instruct a weekend seminar in Calgary, Canada, Yamada Sensei stopped off in Los Angeles and taught the first hour class each evening of May 2nd and 3rd.

On the first evening over 30 students participated in the special class. Everyone - even Yas - was there in time to be on the mat, lined-up, before Yamada Sensei descended the stairs. Compliments to all for that show of good manners. As class opened with the "rowing exercise," a new experience for many, positive energy filled the dojo. Most of his class was focused on ai-hanmi katatetori (cross-hand wrist grab) irimi-nage, with emphasis on the importance of the initial "irimi" (direct entry) step. Yamada Sensei pointed out that O-Sensei used to "hug" the head and neck of his uke during this technique, revealing the potentially lethal effect of correct positioning. Yamada Sensei is known to like using older, well-worn uke for demonstration purposes; hence, Kaz was his favorite uke this night. But Douglas will also remember his deeply penetrating irimi-nage for awhile

On the second evening a similar number of students showed up - again, all on time. Yamada Sensei taught techniques for gyaku-hanmi katatetori (same-side wrist grab), again emphasizing the irimi step. Lots of irimi-nage and kotegaeshi practice made the crowded mat a little hazardous, but only a few minor collisions occurred. After class, Douglas presented Yamada Sensei with a ACLA dojo bag with, of course, his name emblazoned on the side.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the classes taught by Yamada Sensei, and he appeared to enjoy his visit to our dojo. He commented that the students seemed like a "good group" and was impressed

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Yamada Sensei continued:

by how quiet the dojo was during practice. Hopefully, he will return soon.

By Jim Graves.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Several articles are provided for you in this issue for your information. We hope you enjoy them.

"Aikido & Zen - An Aikido Teacher's Experiences at Zenshuji."

Letter from Daniel Restuccio of New Jersey & Response by Sensei.

"Ancient Ways - Training Beyond Limitations."

News clipping from the Rafu Shimpo on Yamada Sensei's Visit in May.

LECTURE ON ETIQUETTE FOR THE ZENSHUJI ZENDEKO

After a very successful lecture last month, Sensei will be giving another lecture on "Proper Etiquette Part 2" to the Zendeko Drum Group on May 26, 1990 in the afternoon.

Those who are interested are welcome to attend. The lecture will be given in the downstairs community room of the Zenshuji Temple. Please contact the instructors for the exact time and place.

Articles Wanted:

We would like to hear from the students. Please submit in your questions and inquiries to Sensei.

Also, we would like to have articles from the students on "What Aikido means to me." or "What I think of Aikido training."

DOJO SCHEDULE

June 2nd. - Instructor's Meeting. After second class.

July 7th. - Instructor's Meeting. After second class.

July 14th & 15th. - O-Bon Festival demonstration at Zenshuji Soto Mission.

July 14th & 15th. - Lotus Day Festival demonstration at Echo Park.

August 4th. - Instructor's Meeting. After second class.

August 26th. - 50th Nisei Week Festival Aikido and Swordsmanship Demonstration from 12:00pm to 2:00pm at the Japan America Theater.

PROMOTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING ON THEIR PROMOTIONS:

Mr. Douglas Firestone - 3rd Dan

Mr. Kazuho Nishida - 2nd Dan

Mr. Jim Graves - 2nd Dan

Mr. James Doi - 1st Dan

Good Luck and keep up the good work. Please give them your encouragements and best wishes and help them to become excellent teachers.

Apologies

I apologize for the delay in the Newsletter in May. the May Issue and the June Issue are combined for this month. Sorry for any inconvenience this has caused.

Rev. Kensho Furuya

From the Rafu Shimpo Newspaper:



◆プロフィール◆
 米国会気連盟理事長
山田嘉光氏
 今年の一月に、世界合気道連盟(東京)から八段を允可された山田嘉光師範(五二)が一日に来羅し、小東京の合気道センターで二日から三日間、スペシャル・セミナーを開いている。

セミナー終了後に忙しい中インタビューに応えてくれた山田師範は、十七歳で合気道を本格的に始め、一九六四年に渡米。同年、道場(ニューヨーク合気会)をオーブンした。当初は愛好者は十五人ほどだったが、二十五年後の今は、約二百五十人が本格的に練習している。米国会気連

盟(加盟道場二〇〇)の理事長でもある山田師範の推定によると、現在全米で約二十万人の合気道愛好者がいるそうだが、「加州では日系人が多く、すね。東部では九九%がアメリカ人で、愛好者は着実に増えていきます。アメリカ人は熱心で探求心があります。素直ですよ。いまではレベルも高く、日本を超えています」と断言する同師範は、世界各国からひっぱりだこで、忙しい今回もフランスから帰ってきたばかりで、当地でセミナーを行った後はカルガリー(カナダ)で講習会を持つ。「まだ合気道は歴史が浅いので、(世界各国との)横のつながりが強く交流が多いのです」という。

合気道は一九四二年、植芝盛平氏によって創設され、現在、嗣子・植芝吉祥丸氏が、総師範として頂点に立つ。シカゴで合気道を広めている藤平明氏に次ぎ、米国二人目の八段となった山田師範。二人とも東京で総師範の教えを受けた兄弟弟子なのだ。最後に同師範は、今後の米国の合気道の発展に向け「国民性を生かし、素直にけいこをして欲しい。自信とプライドを持つて」と後進の指導に当たる人に希望を託している。当地に於けるデモンストラーションの日程は五日(土)午後一時、ジャパニーズビルヂ・プラザで、六日(日)午後一時、ポールドウインビルズ・モールで。(あ)

TRAINING SCHEDULE:

Beginners' and Open Classes

Monday through Friday 6:15pm to 7:15pm
 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 7:30pm to 8:30pm
 Saturdays 10:15am to 11:30am
 Sundays 10:30am to 11:30am

Advanced Classes (3rd Kyu and Above)

Tuesdays and Thursdays (Weapons) 7:30pm to 8:30pm
 Saturdays 11:30am to 12:30pm

Iaido

Wednesdays 8:45pm to 9:45pm
 Saturdays 9:00am to 10:00am
 Sundays 9:15am to 10:15am

Special Afternoon Aikido Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00pm to 2:00pm
 Additional fee for \$20.00 per month for members. For students just taking these afternoon classes \$45.00/month.

SPECIAL RATES FOR MEMBERS

- 3 Months - Free uniform.
- 6 Months - \$385.00 plus free uniform.
- One Year - \$770.00 plus free uniform.

Training Swords:

Mogito Training Sword 28-29 inches in cutting length. For iaido practice only. Grooved. Black tsuka and saya. \$450.00.

Gendaito-Hand Forged Modern Sword 28 1/2 inches in cutting length, grooved and polished. Mounted in Higo style. Signed Hishu ju Yasunori. \$4,500.00.

Gendaito-Hand Forged Modern Sword 27 1/2 inches in cutting length. Very clean but some rust. Signed Kanesada. Mounted. \$3,500.00.

Koto sword made circa 1450's. 28 inches. Gomabashi grooves and very clean in original polish. Mounted with signed, iron fittings. Very nice blade. \$5,000.00.

Japanese swords are very rare and difficult to find these days. These sword are all in good condition, without any flaws and fully mounted.

In practice, never lose the spirit of one step at a time, day by day.

23 Gilpin Ct.
Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648

Dear Sensei Furuya,

Nov. 10, 1989.

Sometimes the best answer is a good clue. For a number of years I have been trying to unravel the mystery of this particular incarnation to myself. When I was 25 I haphazardly began Zen training and have continued off and on for a number of years. Quite recently, in July of this year, I began the study of Aikido with my son Nicholas. I have never been physically active and did not play sports as a child. So I was reasonably prepared for a "slow go" in learning the techniques. However I foolishly thought my Zen training would provide me insight into the underlying principles of Aikido, and to some extent that is true. However what I was not prepared for was the physical experience of the two practices being at odds with one another. Quite by "accident" I came across an old copy (July 1987) of Aikido Today where you talk about Practicing Zen and Aikido and finding them compatible. I would have thought this to be true as well, but am finding strange conflicts. As a witness to both the arts, I am writing you to gain some testimony, some insight ~~evidence~~, as to why I might be having this trouble.

In Zen practice, you know, we are not supposed to "do" anything really, just sit there and cook. Eventually all the water boils away and "~~is~~" essential Nature" is left. In Aikido the focus on movement seems to be causing some confusion in my mind. I find it hard to understand the idea of "extension from the center", better yet, make the transition from emptying the center to considering it, or sensitizing it to the currents of "Ki" energy.

Oddly enough when my body does become sensitized to these "currents" of energy (chi) that sensitivity is literally crushed after an evening at the Zendo. The next morning at the dojo my practice is completely out of sync. It feels as though I "lost" something, I could no longer "feel" where my center was much less anyone else's. ~~It became~~ ~~was so disorienting~~ I was so disoriented that I had to beg off being up when Sensei Stiches called me up.

Usually after a few days I "get back" the "feel" of Aikido, but I can't help but think I must be doing something wrong, because right after Zen practice it's as though I never had any Aikido practice, and I get hopelessly lost and despondent. It doesn't seem right that I should have to discontinue one or the other, is there some way I can adjust my mental attitude so this confusion does not occur?

Sincerely

Daniel J. Restuccia

5-8-90

To Aikido Today C/O Ms. Susan Perry

Reply to letter from Daniel Restuccio 11-10-89

Dear Daniel Restuccio:

Thank you for your letter of the other day. Although your letter is dated in November, 1989, I did not receive it until May of 1990. I apologize for the delay.

First of all, I believe your questions are questions you should discuss with your Aikido teacher and your Zen master. I think it may prove an interesting topic for them as well as to yourself.

I hope you will re-read my article on Zen and Aikido very carefully in the past issue of Aikido Today. I believe that Zen and Aikido are compatible, but I don't believe that they should be intentionally mixed up. I think it's like taking apples and oranges to make a fruit salad. The combination provides an interesting taste but it can never compare to the unique, delicious taste of an apple by itself or the refreshing taste of an orange by itself. If we understand the individual flavor of each fruit, it is almost not necessary to mix them up into a salad. Enjoy Zen for what it is and enjoy Aikido for what it is. I think you will find this enjoyment of each art, if you don't look at Aikido through Zen shaded eye-glasses and don't look at Zen through Aikido shaded glasses.

It is a very common habit to try to analyze our training. The word analyze, in the sense of "understand" in Japanese, is "wakaru" which also comes from the root word, "wakaru," "to cut into small pieces." What we are doing each day, contemplating our lives and striving for direction are important to our daily growth, but this does not mean that we must cut our lives up into little pieces intellectually. As to your main question, I must ask "what is the difference between the mind that moves and the mind that sits quietly? Isn't it the same mind? Why have we created these "differences" which are not substantial and do not exist in reality?

Many trainees divide or "cut" their minds from their bodies and talk about them as two separate entities. The mind and body are an inseparable, integrated, single entity and cannot be divided.

They were never "two" from the very beginning of Nature. By looking at ourselves as individual persons, then trying to divide ourselves into a "mental side" and "physical side" and then trying to find some way to put them back together again into a single unit or "oneness," as many Aikido people say, is a very unnatural, artificial process which can only create confusion and misunderstanding. It's like the orange once again, for example. We can take the whole fruit, a single orange, and appreciate it for what it is. But, if we cut it up into small pieces, it can never be made whole again, as it was, with whatever intellectual ability, science or technology available to us. By our analytical processes or by our intellect, we lose sight of the miracle of nature which is "one" from the very beginning.

The terms "mind" and "body" are ideas created by our intellect to give meaning or value to something we are trying to describe. These "ideas" do not exist in Nature. The bottom line is that they are only words which only indicate that we don't really understand what we are talking about. More than define something, I think they only confuse us. We can say that this intellectual "cutting up" of the world is a form of intellectual violence. What is wrong with looking at the world as it is, as it is supposed to be?

I also practice Zen and Aikido. But I also sleep, eat, drink tea, read books, etc. just like everybody else in this world. But, I only have one mind, just like everybody else. Do you understand?

In the Zendo, just sit. Don't worry about "cooking," as you say; you are not a frying pan. In the Aikido dojo, just practice Aikido, because, you are not sitting.

I think you must be familiar with the theories of "extension," "center," "ki energy," etc. as you write about, but I think you must come to understand the reality that your ki is "already" or "originally" extended and that you are "already" or "originally" centered. When you begin to discriminate between "I am centered" and "I am not centered," you have thrown yourself into the dualistic world of intellectual "cutting."

Finally, to understand where Zen and Aikido come together, you must understand what is "practice." Thank you. Rev. Kensho Furuya.



ANCIENT WAYS

Training Beyond Limitations

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

There is a story of a Zen monk who went to a well-known teacher to ask for instruction. When he approached this teacher, he asked: "How do you achieve enlightenment?" Without a word, the Zen master went looking around, picked up a piece of broken ceramic tile and began to polish it against a stone. The bewildered young monk asked: "What are you doing?"

"Making a mirror," was the reply.

"It's impossible to make a mirror from a piece of tile," retorted the young monk.

"Achieving enlightenment is like polishing this broken tile," replied the Zen master.

...

I was ordained as a novice priest under the Reverend Bishop Kenko Yamashita of the Zenshuj Temple in Los Angeles. He is the representative of the Soto-shu School of Zen Buddhism in this country. The Soto sect of Zen was introduced into Japan by Dogen Zenji in the early 1200s, almost 800 years ago.

As a young priest, Dogen traveled to China to further his training. In those days, even the shortest trip of this nature was arduous and very dangerous. It took its toll on Dogen as well who became very sick on the way. As soon as he arrived, however, his spirits returned and he immediately set off to the temple to begin his training. But, much to his disappointment, it was not what he had expected. The training was lax, there was no discipline, and all the priests were lazy, not pursuing any type of studies at all. Heartbroken, he returned to the ship, thinking about heading home to Japan.

He had spent about two weeks in the ship when a decrepit priest of about 60

years came to the ship to buy dried mushrooms from Japan.

Dogen, with nothing else to do, began a casual conversation with him. "What business did you come for?" inquired Dogen.

"I've come to buy dried mushrooms for tomorrow's soup at my temple," replied the old man.

"Where is your temple?"

"About 14 miles away."

"You came that distance just for mushrooms? You are old, aren't there younger priests who can do this work? It's so hot outside and you must be very tired," replied Dogen.

"I have to do this work because it is my work and no one else's," said the monk.

"Why don't you rest here tonight and go back tomorrow morning when it is much cooler," Dogen offered.

"I must return today because this is for tomorrow's soup, which I must prepare. I will leave as soon as I buy these mushrooms."

"You are obviously a senior monk at your temple, why don't you spend your time studying the teachings instead of doing such menial work which the younger priests should do?" demanded Dogen.

"The younger priests are not me. I am not them. This is my job. Obviously," replied the old monk, "you don't understand the meaning of practice."

"What do you mean by that?!" asked the astonished Dogen.

"In everything in this world, there is nothing hidden," said the old monk, and he left, vanishing down the road.

...

I think many of us understand a little about martial arts, but few people understand, as Dogen Zenji came to understand, the meaning of training or practice. Even Bruce Lee said that "our practice should be without limitations."

But what does that mean? To understand practice beyond limitations is to understand how a piece of broken tile can be transformed into a bright mirror. It is to understand how an old monk of 60 years can travel almost 30 miles in the hot sun just to buy a few mushrooms for soup.

At my own *aikido* dojo, many people

come in and watch the class. It looks easy enough and maybe somewhere they heard that aikido was easy, so they sign up. After a few days of training though, they go to my assistants, complaining in discouragement, "Aikido is much more difficult than I thought!"

I don't remember telling anyone it was easy.

Hard or easy is not the problem. I think the source of discouragement and disappointment is that preconceived ideas and notions are created, and then dashed to pieces on the training mats. This does not happen with only beginners but at all levels of skill. We come into the martial arts with expectations. These expectations are so common that most of the time, we are not even aware of them. But, it is these preconceptions and notions that limit us, and are obstacles to our training.

For example, it is obvious that we train to become stronger. But somewhere along the line, and the sooner the better, we discover that there is something more to martial arts than just strength. I see many people enter martial arts for money, fame, strength, to be better than others, to be tougher than others, to beat others, to open a school, or to make money. There are a thousand reasons to study martial arts.

Two students suddenly left my school, and a year later, I found out that they left because they thought they could never get their black belts. If I had the chance, I would say to them, "Why do you study aikido? Is it to study aikido itself, or to get a black belt? Your priorities and direction are all mixed up."

Training and practice cannot exist within the context of our selfish desires or expectations. Within our own expectations, our training becomes cramped. This limitation prevents us from dealing with the opponent appropriately and effectively.

Most students are not defeated by their opponents. They are defeated by the narrow limitations they set upon themselves; limitations made up in the head and broken down in the face of reality.

We have to get back to a kind of training without limitations. This does not, in any way, mean to pursue reckless or dan-

gerous activities. It means that we must pursue a kind of training without any expectations or thoughts of any reward.

When you can give up everything, even the thought of developing skill, so that you can finally devote yourself to your training wholeheartedly, at that moment, the training without limitations begins. As long as you are stuck with all of this unnecessary garbage (money, fame or whatever), and all the burdens which have nothing to do with your practice, you cannot progress. You waste your whole career in martial arts, drowning in your own fantasies and obsessions.

When your understanding cannot break through the impossible task of polishing a mirror from a piece of tile, you are convinced that your training makes sense, and is a very logical, step-by-step process. Unfortunately, real practice, like your daily life or existence, cannot fit into such clean and easy categories of reason. Martial arts is not a business where you can calculate how many pennies you make for every head of cabbage sold. Martial arts does not follow such an easy accounting. The practice of true martial arts, which is inseparable from the reality of our existence, is a life discipline.

Many, like Dogen Zenji, who couldn't at first understand the words, "Nothing is hidden" from the old monk, think that practice is based on discrimination between young and old, rich and poor, good and bad, slow and fast, weak and strong, and, me and others. But "Nothing is hidden" means just that. You may ask, "Well, then, why can't we see it?" You can't see it because your eyes are not open. Your eyes are blinded by your own ego. And you are blinded by your own limitations.

In our society today, we learn to judge everything in terms of success. And, more often than not, we determine success by what other people think, not by our own measure. I had a student who was very awkward, but he thought he was very good. It seemed like the harder he tried the worse he got. Finally, I said rather harshly, "You're hopeless and have no chance to get good; you had better give up." He was rather shocked at my words but continued to

practice, although he gave up all hope of ever becoming a black belt. After he gave up the thought of becoming good, he began to enjoy training for the sake of the training itself, and quickly reached the black-belt level.

How can you try to make sense of something as profound as martial arts without intense effort? How can you so easily discriminate between what you like and dislike, me and you, high and low? In martial arts training, anything is possible, and the mind must be kept open for these infinite possibilities. A mind which is open to all possibilities is a mind which holds onto nothing. This is the mental attitude to approach practice without limitations.

In training, we continually think in terms of gain. Yet Sawaki Kodo Roshi, a great Zen master, once said, "Loss is enlightenment." I had a difficult time understanding this when I first heard it,

and I am sure that, at first impression, it doesn't make any sense at all to you. You may think, "What is the purpose of martial arts, if it only means to lose?" I don't think Kodo Roshi was talking in terms of losing a match. He means to give up everything and come to the point of absolute zero.

To reach the point of no-return is the beginning of practice. When someone finally cuts the rope we are clinging to for dear life, and we realize that we didn't need the rope at all, we begin the practice of no limitation. This does not mean to simply devise new moves and new techniques. As long as you cling to all of the old assumptions and to all of the common misconceptions, you cannot escape from the world of limitations. In practice without any limitations, it *is* possible for a broken piece of tile to become a bright shiny mirror. This is freedom. ★

choose for ourselves whether we want to practice on the "practice area of trading compromises" or the "practice area of trading complaints." We always try to clarify the difference between the two in our daily lives through our Aikido training and , in this way, perhaps, Aikido might resemble the way we practice Zazen.

This is just one of many interesting episodes of one Aikido teacher visiting Zenshuji in Little Tokyo.

Daniel M. Furuya,
Aikido Center of Los Angeles
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Los Angeles, Calif 90012

AIKIDO AND ZEN
"An Aikido Teacher's Experiences With Zenshuji"

By Daniel M. Furuya,
Chief Instructor of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

I have had an interest in Zen for a very long time especially because of my interest in Japanese martial arts and culture. When I first opened my school in the Little Tokyo area about five years ago, I was very happy to find a place so close to Zenshuji. I always wanted to visit Zenshuji but I was very hesitant because I didn't know anyone there and I didn't know what to expect. One of my students was very interested in beginning Zazen so I suggested that he visit Zenshuji and ask about their program. He was also hesitant about going but I made an agreement with him that if he started I would start with him. He asked the priests at Zenshuji about Zazen and happened to mention that he was practicing Aikido. One of the priests said: "I don't particularly like Aikido, it's not very good!" My student returned to the dojo and was very angry at what the priest had said. When I heard this, I thought, "How wonderful! This priest could instantly understand my student's personality so well." I was very much encouraged so I went myself to Zenshuji on the very next day. I met the same priest and asked about Zazen. He welcomed me to join the Zazenkaï. I then mentioned that I practiced Aikido and he said the very same thing to me: "Oh, I don't particularly like Aikido, it's not very good!" Then, I replied: "You're right, I don't like Aikido very much either!" He was surprised and said: "No! No! I really didn't mean that!" and we both laughed together. This is how I started Zazen practice at Zenshuji.

I learned many things in the Zazenkaï Study Class but I was particularly inspired by a sermon on Uchiyama Koshô's "Guzuri no Hiroba," or "the Marketplace for Trading Complaints." Recently, through a series of coincidental events, I had the opportunity to really understand these words and how it applied to my Aikido and my teaching.

In October of 1988, an associate of mine in San Francisco suddenly passed away just two weeks before he was about to conduct his 10th tour of Japan. Several days later I found out that he, just before he died, asked if I could go and manage the tour in his place. I couldn't refuse his last request, so I made frantic efforts to get my passport and visa and luggage and a loan from my friends, etc. so I could go. I had not been to Japan in twenty years so I was anxious to go but it was a lot of work and very difficult for me. In twenty years, Japan has changed so much and has become so crowded that I could see how Uchiyama Roshi could speak of "a marketplace for compromise" or "a marketplace for complaints" where everyone has difficulty just getting around on the crowded trains and streets. It's much, much worse than the crowded freeways of Los Angeles

that I am accustomed to seeing everyday.

On our tour, we were travelling by a private tour bus which was very wide and big, through a twisting, very narrow, mountain road. It was so narrow we often thought that the bus might simply slide off the road down the steep cliffs which hugged the side of the road so closely. At one point, we came around a sharp bend where the road was particularly narrow and, to our surprise, there were about a dozen cars coming from the opposite direction. There was no way for the bus to pass by and we all thought what a horrible position to be in. It couldn't be any worse than this. But, with a few hand signals from the bus driver and, with each car signalling to the car behind him, they all began to back up about twenty yards or so where the road became a little wider and we were able to easily pass by and go on our way. This was all done quite smoothly and I thought to myself, "This must be an example of 'yuzuri no hiroba' or 'a marketplace for trading compromise.'"

Many of the tour members said that this was the most amazing thing they ever saw on the whole tour of Japan! They said that this could never happen in America, we would all be stuck, honking our horns and swearing at the other person to move first. We would all be stuck in an irresolvable stalemate with no one getting anywhere.

Often, in the Aikido dojo, the practice area is so crowded that we cannot even see the mat at our feet. We just see people and uniforms moving about everywhere. No matter how crowded the practice area is however, we still manage to practice hard, always finding a place to throw our partner and a place to fall down, trying not to get into the way of the others. We all do this without thinking because it is simply the only way to practice in such a tight and crowded situation. Sometimes we go first, sometimes we have to wait a second for the other people on the mat to move. It is a natural thing common to Aikido dojos everywhere. We don't mind at all, even though it is so crowded, indeed, it is fun at times to practice with so many people. When I returned from Japan, I saw this and thought: "This is another example of 'yuzuri no hiroba' but I would like to call this 'yuzuri no keikoba' or 'Aikido practice area of trading compromise.'" Sometimes, students and even instructors practice as if they are the only people on the whole mat. They bump into everyone and complain that everyone is in their way or the mat area is too small. I think this can be called "guzuri no keikoba" or "Aikido practice area of trading complaints." In Aikido, no matter how crowded or tight the situation is, we can always move freely because we never collide with the other person to try to get in his way. We practice, considering everyone around us, and we enjoy unlimited freedom of movement. But, Aikidoists who believe they own the whole practice area, collide with everyone and everything and I think, even the whole universe seems much too small for them.

These days, we often think we lose our freedom if we must consider the position and space of others, but I don't believe this is so after studying Zazen. I think we