



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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Pay Attention to Even the Smallest Detail

In our practice, we should pay attention to even the smallest detail. That is one of the purposes of our practice and why we to keep the dojo so clean. There is an old saying in Japan. The thief first looks at the front entrance of a house and if the shoes are all nicely arranged, he believes the house is well ordered so he doesn't attempt to enter. But, if he finds a house where all the shoes are in disorder at the front entrance, he believes that probably there must be a window or door carelessly left open and this place will be easy to break into.

The entrance to a house or dojo should always be kept clean and in good order. It means that the students here are well trained. I heard that a monk will pass by a temple if the front gate is not well kept. The monk will think, "It's so dirty. There is no discipline here and I won't be able to receive good training."

Here is another interesting story from the Hagakure, a classic on the warrior code. Long time ago, one day, a lord was trimming his finger nails. There was a young warrior in attendance. When he had finished, he invited the attendant to leave but the young warrior wouldn't go. The lord smiled at him in praise. The young warrior wouldn't leave because he only picked up nine nail clippings when there should have been ten. The lord, to test the alertness of this young warrior, hid one clipping on purpose. Without this kind of alertness to detail and sensitivity, we cannot progress in our martial arts training.

During a hunting party, this same lord suddenly sat down on a log and put a few stems of grass on his head. Generally, attendants would bring a portable chair for their lord to sit on so to sit on a log is unusual but to put grass on his head is very strange. Everyone looked at the lord in wonder and surprise. Suddenly one of his retainers understood the meaning and brought him a cup of tea. The Chinese character for tea is made up of three symbols. The character for "grass" at the top, the character for "man" in the middle, and "wood" at the bottom.

Our training is to become alert and sensitive to everything about us. We must learn to become sensitive to the other person. Only in this way can we come to understand the hidden meaning in everything.

When we can see even the smallest detail in everything, we know that we have progressed in our training.

One day, quite a few years ago, when I was working in the bank, smoke started to come into the building. Obviously, it was a fire. Several bank tellers came up to me and said, "There's a fire in the building, can I go home early today?" So I said, "No." She was surprised. I went for the fire extinguisher and simply put it out because I could see it was just a tiny fire. Later, everyone said that I was a hero. I don't think so, it was simply the natural, common sense thing to do. But, I think this young person's thinking was wrong somewhere not caring for her friends or co-workers or the safety of others, but just thinking of herself.

When our thinking is very shallow, we are usually only thinking of ourselves. As your thinking becomes deeper and more profound, you lose this ego-centric thinking and begin to think of others. Somehow, I have come to believe that man was given a consciousness only because he must think of others more than himself. If man had to think of himself only, he wouldn't a mind or soul at all. All he would need is his instincts to eat and survive.

What makes Aikido difficult is not the complicated movements or techniques. It is "humanity in action." How we become humane, caring people is the most difficult training of all. Without this understanding, our strength or skill or rank is meaningless.

Deepest Sympathies

I would like to extend my deepest condolences on behalf of myself and the dojo to the Mike Lee Family.

Mike Lee, the book editor for Rainbow Publications (Black Belt Magazine), was assaulted in Chinatown on October 9, 1990 and died from his injuries on October 11, 1990. He was one of the first to see our completed dojo and has always had a high respect for Aikido and our school. He will be sorely missed.

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DOJO NEWS:

Mr. Steve Tarango was just married on October 6, 1990. We wish him and his new wife lots of success and happiness.

Mr. Curtis Westfall is a new father of a son, Mason Westfall. Congratulations!

Mr. Tony Gonsalves, a black belt and senior student now living in Florida, visited the dojo for training from October 1st through the 5th. Many members of the dojo were happy to see him.

Mr. Steve Stephanides, a black belt and senior student, entered MIT in September to study major in the field of engineering and is now training at the New England Aikikai.

Mr. Paul Williams has re-arranged his school schedule to come to the dojo everyday of the week for training. Everyone should encourage practice and his great efforts.

Master Adam Hsu left for Mainland China for one month from October 1st. He has been invited to participate in Mainland China's national convention of kung-fu artists. He plans to visit the dojo for another seminar after November when he returns from his travels. We hope he has a pleasant trip.

Hataya Sensei visited the dojo during the first week of October. He taught classes to the Iaido Section. He will be coming to Los Angeles again at the beginning of November.

Mr. Morgan Weisser, a black belt and senior student, has just landed a role in the popular TV series, China Beach. He was also working on a movie which will soon be released. He plays some kind of psychotic killer who gets killed in the end. Wonderful part.

We Need Your Help

We will be needing help, as we have done in the past, to cover our Yellow Pages Ad which is a big expense for the dojo. If volunteers can contribute a few extra dollars each month to help with the cost of the ad, it will be greatly appreciated. Please see the black belts for more information. As our membership grows and stabilizes, we will no longer need such a large ad. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

General Meeting

There will be a general meeting on October 21, 1990, Sunday, from 11:30am to 1:00pm. All members are encouraged to attend and give your support and input. Some topics on the agenda are as follows:

1. Fund raising for the telephone display ad.
2. Increase training schedule (number of hours) for Aikido and Swordsmanship.
3. General discussion from membership.

Lecture Series

Sensei has initiated a lecture series during the second hour on Friday nights to stimulate the interest of and educate the members on background information on martial arts and Aikido and its philosophy. It is not only a lecture series but a question and answer period as well for students to discuss points of Aikido and their practice which cannot be answered during regular training hours.

The last two sessions have proven to be a big success. The first lecture discussed background material for Aikido and martial arts in general. The second lecture covered "The Meaning of Practice." On October 12, 1990, Akira Kurosawa's famous adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth, The Throne of Blood (Kumonosu Jo) was shown.

The next lecture is scheduled for October 26, 1990 and will discuss "The Care and Cleaning and Proper Handling of the Japanese Sword."

Future lectures and programs will be announced soon. We will be privately showing various "Samurai" movies, occasionally, just as a change of pace.

BATTODO L.A. SHIBU

Since the very successful Nisei Week demonstration, we have had an incredible response from the public as well as from our guests from Japan. Hataya Sensei visited us again in the beginning of October and various matters regarding our Iaido Section were discussed again.

Hataya Sensei has made a commitment to come, as much as possible, on a monthly basis from Japan. Therefore, each month, we can benefit at least one or two days from his instruction. He will be training Mr. Douglas Firestone as his first assistant. I think we must respond in kind to his generous consideration by increasing our own practice schedule.

At the same time, we should more actively utilize our status as the Los Angeles Branch of the All Japan Battodo Federation. Effective immediately, the Saturday morning class will begin from 7:30am to 9:30am. Clean-up will be from 9:30am to 9:50am. Aikido will start at its regular time from 10:15am.

We must first negotiate the Children's Class before we can determine the Sunday schedule. The Wednesday class starts at 8:45pm so we cannot lengthen this practice schedule. Wednesday will be devoted to Muso Shinden Ryu Iaido. Whereas, Saturday and Sunday will be devoted to Battodo.

Members of the Battodo Shibu will require the proper uniform including a black hakama. They will also need a sword cleaning kit, one practice sword and one real sword for cutting or "tameshigiri" practice.

The "tameshigiri" practice requires more preparation and clean-up time so students should come early for practice allowing lots of preparation time.

Because of the usage of "live" blades, the rules of etiquette and proper behavior will be strictly enforced. This is to prevent any injury or problems during practice. Any member of the Battodo Los Angeles Shibu who violates these rules will be expelled from practice.

1. Always check the mekugi before practice. Learn how to make the proper mekugi.
2. During cutting practice, only the person cutting may wear the sword. All other swords must be on the sword rack.
3. Please watch your practice space at all times during practice.
4. Keep our equipment, uniform and especially sword in perfect order.

5. Follow the teacher's instructions explicitly and implicitly.
6. Do not borrow another's sword.
7. Everybody must help with the clean-up and preparation of the maki-wara for cutting.
8. Do not use damaged equipment.
9. The proper behavior and proper mental attitude must be maintained at all times.
10. Students can only practice with the teacher's permission.

Current Training Program

1. Basic suburi.
2. Eight katas.
3. Four basic cuts.

* * * * *

Please learn to count to ten in Japanese.

Please answer with "hai" when spoken to or called.

Please give your greetings to the teacher when entering and leaving the dojo.

Always take care of your sword. Never let it leave your side. Always keep it clean.

Always watch the other person's space.

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LOS ANGELES FESTIVAL DEMO

On September 15th, The dojo participated in an Aikido demonstration for the Los Angeles Festival at the Palos Verdes Art Center. It was a big success and very well received. The following students participated: Mr. Douglas Firestone, Mr. Kaz Nishida, Mr. Jim Graves, Mr. Victor Rodriguez, Mr. Yasushi Matsuki, Mr. James Doi, Mr. Ken Watanabe and Mr. Gary Myers.

From the Children's Class

"Aikido training is now simpler than it was when I first started to learn Aikido. I hope to become more stronger and flexible in a few years from now which I know I will. I also want to know how to defend myself from gangsters or other mean people who want to beat me up. So that's how I feel!

By Ibrahim Ruvalcaba, Age 12.

Aikido on the Street

By Jim Graves, 2nd Dan

Perhaps because of my silvering hair, I'm often asked by newer practitioners if and how I have used Aikido in real-life, self-defense situations. Or the question is: "Could you defend yourself against. . .?" Although self-defense is not the primary motive for my training, because Aikido is a system of self-defense, it is not unreasonable to ask about the practical usefulness of this training outside the dojo.

Once, several years ago I put a sankyo on a drunken college student who was slapping around a co-ed. He was so drunk that it took a second or so for him to react to the sankyo (Or was it just a weak technique then?) But this "practical Aikido" was really just child's play; it didn't require much training at all. I could just as easily have used a hammer lock that I learned when I was seven or eight years old. But the sankyo seemed a more delicate approach.

Moe recently, however, an incident occurred in which I probably avoided serious injury. While on a business trip in Kansas City, friends and I were trotting across an intersection, I in the lead. As I came to the last lane before the curb, I looked up to see a Yellow Taxi, initially obscured by a stopped truck, coming

directly at me, hood ornament aimed at my center. For most of my life I have operated on the theory that if a pedestrian looks a motorist straight in the eye, he/she will surely stop. Well, I did, but he didn't! The cab driver seemed oblivious to my presence in front of him.

With the taxi less than 10 feet away, bearing down on me, there was no time for thought. At that moment an interesting phenomenon occurred. My mind created a little fantasy, while my "no-mind" took action. The fantasy was a visualization of being hit by the cab, hurled in the air and coming down for a very high breakfall. At the same time I moved - with no recollection of exactly how - to a position where the passing cab only brushed the outside of my right leg and nipped the toe of my left shoe. Incredibly, my no-mind had even turned the right leg and hip to save the kneecap from imminent damage. As the cab pulled away, without a hint of slowing down, I was astonished that it missed me. And how did I get to this safe position? I had no idea.

My ability to evade the cab-attack had little to do with my "skill" as an Aikidoist, but rather with the thousands of hours of training over the past decade. The mind-dulling numbers of repetitions of moving to avoid an attack refines the subconscious ability to perceive the attack and evade it. Thus, practicing the initial move is one of the most important aspects of training. Without many, many hours (at least hundreds) on the mat, I doubt that there would have been such a "no-mind response", and my fantasy would have become reality - or worse.

While this cab-attack incident speaks to the benefit of training in the nage role, I have many more times used my training as uke in the realm of self-protection. From a simple slip on wet pavement to the to the diving, last-ditch effort on the racquetball court, my body has been spared injury by the spontaneous application of ukemi. But only with the same focus and long-term dedication to this side of Aikido training does the body "learn" to protect itself while falling.

Thus, the circles completes itself, and it is apparent that both sides of physical training are necessary to form a complete system of self-protection. In addition to the ability to react spontaneously in potentially dangerous situations, our training will help to refine the awareness and intuition that maximizes our ability to avoid such situations. Thus, Aikido as self-defense is not so much knowing how to apply a good sankyo or to take a beautiful breakfall, but it is developed through the process of perfecting that sankyo or breakfall. And that process has no end-point during a lifetime.

Jim Graves, 2nd Dan

Wednesday, September 19, 1990



konnichi-wa

by jim henry



Tokyo

END OF AN ERA

For 38 years, Shiro Nakagawa, superintendent of the ueno Zoological Gardens in Taito-ku, Tokyo, made a rule to enter the front gate on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and at the rear gate on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, make the rounds of the eastern part of the garden and then go to his office.

Those one-hour, early morning rounds in which he says to the animals, "How are you, my dear ones?" came to an end on July 24, when Nakagawa retired from his post and left the gardens for good.

"Are the animals kept in cages at the gardens happy?"

A reporter asked this silly question more than 10 years ago when Nakagawa was chief of the gardens' breeding section.

He responded, "That question sounds like one wondering whether a man living today is happier than the one who lived in ancient times." The reporter was very much impressed with his clear-cut answer.

It was also at this time that the reporter learned the concept of "escape distance," which, according to Nakagawa, is an animal's instinctive knowledge of the distance needed to avoid being caught by enemies. He went on to explain that if animals live under the gaze of humans within that escape distance, they are uncomfortable.

Animals should be given enough space so they feel secure and comfortable, Nakagawa said.

Nakagawa also said that zoos should be primarily concerned with the preservation of animal species, not showgrounds for human visitors.

He then cited the word "sotsu-taku," as one of his favorite words.

"Sotsu" implies a chick trying to peck its way out of an eggshell, while "taku" means a parent helping the small one by poking the shell from outside at exactly the right moment.

The word should remind everyone of the love and affection animals have for each

other and what the relationship between man and animal should be.

JAPANESE WORKERS ARE NOT HAPPY

Despite steady increases in wages, an increasing number of workers are dissatisfied with their living standard because of widening disparities in asset holdings due mainly to land price spirals, according to a Labor Ministry white paper.

The white paper indicated that 63 percent of workers own houses or condominiums in 1989, a decrease of 3 percentage points from 1986; commodity prices in Japan are the highest among industrialized nations; Japanese workers have 699 hours less free time than West Germans and 294 hours less than Americans.

The paper concluded that it is indispensable for Japan to improve the livelihood of its workers since its economic extension was made possible by people who worked diligently, led by prospects of better wages and improved livelihood.

Nisei Week Demonstration VHS

Very shortly, VHS tapes of the 50th Annual Nisei Week Aikido and Swordsmanship Demonstration will be available.

Donation of \$25.00 is requested. Funds will be used for dojo repair work.

JAPANESE LESSON:

How to count to ten in Japanese:

Ich, ni, san, shi, go, roku, shichi, hachi, kyū, ju.

Translation: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Essay

Barbara Ehrenreich

The Warrior Culture

In what we like to think of as “primitive” warrior cultures, the passage to manhood requires the bleeding of a spear, the taking of a scalp or head. Among the Masai of eastern Africa, the North American Plains Indians and dozens of other pretechnological peoples, a man could not marry until he had demonstrated his capacity to kill in battle. Leadership too in a warrior culture is typically contingent on military prowess and wrapped in the mystique of death. In the Solomon Islands a chief’s importance could be reckoned by the number of skulls posted around his door, and it was the duty of the Aztec kings to nourish the gods with the hearts of human captives.

All warrior peoples have fought for the same high-sounding reasons: honor, glory or revenge. The nature of their real and perhaps not conscious motivations is a subject of much debate. Some anthropologists postulate a murderous instinct, almost unique among living species, in human males. Others discern a materialistic motive behind every fray: a need for slaves, grazing land or even human flesh to eat. Still others point to the similarities between war and other male pastimes—the hunt and outdoor sports—and suggest that it is boredom, ultimately, that stirs men to fight.

But in a warrior culture it hardly matters which motive is most basic. Aggressive behavior is rewarded whether or not it is innate to the human psyche. Shortages of resources are habitually taken as occasions for armed offensives, rather than for hard thought and innovation. And war, to a warrior people, is of course the highest adventure, the surest antidote to malaise, the endlessly repeated theme of legend, song, religious myth and personal quest for meaning. It is how men die and what they find to live for.

“You must understand that Americans are a warrior nation,” Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan told a group of Arab leaders in early September, one month into the Middle East crisis. He said this proudly, and he may, without thinking through the ugly implications, have told the truth. In many ways, in outlook and behavior the U.S. has begun to act like a primitive warrior culture.

We seem to believe that leadership is expressed, in no small part, by a willingness to cause the deaths of others. After the U.S. invasion of Panama, President Bush exulted that no one could call him “timid”; he was at last a “macho man.” The press, in even more primal language, hailed him for succeeding in an “initiation rite” by demonstrating his “willingness to shed blood.”

For lesser offices too we apply the standards of a warrior culture. Female candidates are routinely advised to overcome the handicap of their gender by talking “tough.” Thus, for example, Dianne Feinstein has embraced capital punishment, while Colorado senatorial candidate Josie Heath has found it necessary to announce that although she is the mother of an 18-year-old son, she is prepared to vote for war. Male candi-

dates in some of the fall contests are finding their military records under scrutiny. No one expects them, as elected officials in a civilian government, to pick up a spear or a sling and fight. But they must state, at least, their willingness to have another human killed.

More tellingly, we are unnerved by peace and seem to find it boring. When the cold war ended, we found no reason to celebrate. Instead we heated up the “war on drugs.” What should have been a public-health campaign, focused on the persistent shame of poverty, became a new occasion for martial rhetoric and muscle flexing. Months later, when the Berlin Wall fell

and communism collapsed throughout Europe, we Americans did not dance in the streets. What we did, according to the networks, was change the channel to avoid the news. Nonviolent revolutions do not uplift us, and the loss of mortal enemies only seems to leave us empty and bereft.

Our collective fantasies center on mayhem, cruelty and violent death. Loving images of the human body—especially of bodies seeking pleasure or expressing love—inspire us with the urge to censor. Our preference is for warrior themes: the lone fighting man, bandoliers across his naked chest, mowing down lesser men in gusts of automatic-weapon fire. Only a real war seems to revive our interest in real events. With the Iraqi crisis, the networks report, ratings for news shows rose again—even higher than they were for Panama.

And as in any primitive warrior culture, our warrior élite takes pride of place. Social crises multiply numbingly—homelessness, illiteracy, epidemic disease—and our leaders tell us solemnly that nothing can be done. There is no money. We are poor, not rich, a debtor nation. Meanwhile, nearly a third of the federal budget flows, even in moments of peace, to the warriors and their weaponmakers. When those priorities are questioned, some new “crisis” dutifully arises to serve as another occasion for armed and often unilateral intervention.

Now, with Operation Desert Shield, our leaders are reduced to begging foreign powers for the means to support our warrior class. It does not seem to occur to us that the other great northern powers—Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union—might not have found the stakes so high or the crisis quite so threatening. It has not penetrated our imagination that in a world where the powerful, industrialized nation-states are at last at peace, there might be other ways to face down a pint-size Third World warrior state than with massive force of arms. Nor have we begun to see what an anachronism we are in danger of becoming: a warrior nation in a world that pines for peace, a high-tech state with the values of a warrior band.

A leftist might blame “imperialism”; a right-winger would call our problem “internationalism.” But an anthropologist, taking the long view, might say this is just what warriors do. Intoxicated by their own drumbeats and war songs, fascinated by the glint of steel and the prospect of blood, they will go forth, time and again, to war. ■



ILLUSTRATION FOR TIME BY MARK HESS

AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES
NEWSLETTER

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October 8, 1990

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Dear Sensai,

I apologize for my delay in writing you. It has been quite sometime since I left the Aikido Center. I do hope this letter finds you well and in great spirits.

New York has been fun and exciting as well as dirty and disappointing. The city has definitely changed since I was last here; especially with the news that New York is broke and will suffer a great many lay-offs.

I can't begin to tell you how much I miss The Aikido Center and your teaching. I know that I'm in the City that has the New York Aikikai; but it's not the same. Since returning I've studied at two Aikido Schools, the first being the New York Ki Society. The Chief instructor was Shizuo Imaizumi, 7th Dan and he was very good. I told them where I had studied and with whom I had studied. During the course of my training there I would run into obstacles. Students and the teacher would tell me I was doing the old style. I would say I'm doing traditional Aikido as taught by my Sensai and as taught in Japan. One student (a black belt) said my style was considered street Aikido.

I told him "I was doing Aikido as taught by Master Morihei Uyeshiba".

His reply was, "Who?"

I said, "O-Sensai"

He said, "you mean Tohei"

I said, "No Uyeshiba"

He said, "Who is that".

At this point I knew this was not the dojo or me. I preceded to The New York Aikikai for my training. I had trained there before, but was not as impressed as The Aikido Center. Everyone who saw my patch knew where I was from and kept complimenting The Aikido Center. They all would say that it was such a pretty dojo and you have such a good Sensai. They were also impressed with the fact that you were a buddhist priest. It made me feel great and at the same time quite home sick. I truly miss The Aikido Center and know that I will return. When it is time for me to test for

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Shodan I would like to do as Tony Gonzalez. Return to the Aikido Center to test under my teacher.

I guess I've rambled on for long enough. It's probably time to bring this letter to a conclusion. before I close I would like to say how sorry I'm about your release as editor for the news letter. With all of your knowledge you truly made it a wonderful and informative newsletter. Your expertise will be missed.

I'm also enclosing a check for \$20.00 so that I may receive the dojo monthly newsletter so as not to feel so home sick.

Thank you for your time.


Adam

P.S. Please say hello to Douglas and my fellow Aikidoists.