



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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50th ANNUAL NISEI WEEK AIKIDO & JAPANESE SWORDSMANSHIP DEMO A BIG SUCCESS

The 50th Annual Nisei Week Aikido and Japanese Swordmanship Demonstration held at the Japan America Theatre in Little Tokyo on August 26, 1990 was a big success. It was a full house with tickets sold out about two days before the performance. According to the Japan America Theater Director, Ms. Teusa Masuda, about 500 people were turned away at the door just before the demonstration began. Several people with extra tickets sold them immediately and others waited around for at least an hour without getting in.

The demonstration began with an excellent opening performance by the Zenshuji Zendeko drumming troupe. This was followed by introductions from Mr. Patrick Seki, Chairman of Sports Events, and Ms. Frances Hashimoto, Chairwoman of this year's Nisei Week Festival. The Nisei Week Queen and her court were also introduced and the Queen presented awards to Rev. Kensho Furuya, Mr. Mitsuo Hataya and Mr. Fukuzo Hirano of the Zen Nippon Battodo Federation, Madame Baba Shusui and Madame Yumi Hara of Shigin and Kenbu and Mr. Fumio Demura of the Shito Ryu Itosu Kai Karate - Japanese Karate Federation.

Twenty members of the All Japan Battodo Federation gave an excellent demonstration of cutting and swordmanship. The Shigin and Kenbu demonstration was followed by Fumio Demura Sensei and finally the members of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. The Battodo group made a final performance at the end with Hataya Sensei cleanly cutting through seven rolled up mats and we closed to a standing ovation by an very enthusiastic audience.

We would like to thank everyone who helped with the demonstration, selling tickets, putting up posters, escorting our guests from Japan, cleaning up the dojo, odd jobs, and supporting the demonstration in general.

Everyone did a very good job as illustrated by the great response by everyone in the community. This was one of the biggest martial demonstrations ever performed in the community and at the Japan America Theatre. Next year, I will leave the entire demonstration up to the students and black belts. Thank you.

Zen Nippon Battodo Members from Japan

The members of the All Japan Battodo Federation made their very first visit to the United States for the occasion of our Nisei Week Demonstration. They arrived on Thursday afternoon, August 23rd. After checking in at the Hotel Tokyo in Little Tokyo, they immediately walked to the dojo to begin preparation for the demonstration. After practice, we all stopped in at Zenshuji to pray for success, and returned to the Hotel, all walking in their kimono and carrying their swords. It was quite a unusual sight for the members of the Little Tokyo community. That evening, we had dinner at the ABC Chinese Restaurant. On August 24th, Friday, they set off for two days in Las Vegas. They all enjoyed the night club shows and one member hit the jackpot twice and won over \$1,600.00. He immediately called home to his wife to find out what size dress she wore so he could buy her a present. Returning Saturday morning, without much rest, directly from the airport, we took them to the Beverly Center where they did six hours of shopping and sight-seeing. That evening, we had dinner at the Regency Restaurant and stayed up late into the evening talking about martial arts and swords. The next morning, we gathered together and made our way to the Japan America Theatre for our Demonstration. The Demonstration was a big success and that evening we celebrated with a grand "Thank You" Dinner at the Club 41 in Pasadena. The next day, we took several members to the shooting range in the Tujunga mountains while the others went directly to the Universal Studios. At the shooting range, we were lucky to meet the Los Angeles Police Department Swat Team who gave us a special demonstration of sharp shooting and usage of their latest artillery. They don't miss! They had heard about our demonstration. From the range, we joined the others at Universal Studios, taking the tour and returning to the Hotel very tired. The very next morning, they all returned to Japan. A typical Japanese tour.

Everyone from Japan enjoyed themselves immensely and were impressed with the warm hospitality and welcome of our dojo. They commented on the beauty of the dojo and high level of the students. They were very happy with the demonstration and I think it was one of the biggest demonstrations they have ever participated in and, of course, it was the first time they have ever had a standing ovation from the audience.

Seeing America and its people for the first time, one member commented, "Now I can understand why Japan lost the war!"

They will be back next year for next year's Nisei Week Demonstration.

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SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following people and groups who helped our demonstration to be a great success.

Mitsuo Hataya Sensei, leader and coordinator for the members of the All Japan Battodo Federation group.

Fumio Demura Sensei of the Shito Ryu Itosu Kai - Japan Karate Federation and his students.

The Zenshuji Zendeko.

Madame Baba Shusui.

Madame Yumi Hara.

The Rafu Shigin Kokusei Kai.

The Rafu Shigin Kokufu Kai.

Mr. Patrick Seki, Chairman of Sports Events, Nisei Week.

Ms. Frances Hashimoto, Chairwoman of the Nisei Week Japanese Festival Committee.

The Nisei Week Queen and her court.

And, our sponsors,

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Nanka Token Kai - The Japanese Sword Society of Southern California

Also, special thanks to the members of the ACLA for helping out at two Nisei Week Demonstrations at the Yaohan Plaza and one demonstration at the Japanese Village Plaza, which we were all well received.

AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

*Reverend Kensho Furuya
Chief Instructor and Director*

Congratulations

TWO NEW BLACK BELTS

We would like to offer our congratulations and words of encouragement to Mr. William Gillespie and Mr. Ken Watanabe who both successfully passed their examinations for Shodan or first degree black belt on September 2, 1990.

"ACLA Benkyo-kai"

Aikido Lecture Series To Begin September 21, 1990

Sensei will begin a lecture series on Friday evenings at least twice a month on the philosophy of Aikido. The lecture series will also include a wider range of topics such as Eastern philosophy in general, history, martial arts, Japanese swords, and Zen. This series will be directed to enhance your training and to discuss topics that we generally do not have time to discuss during regular training. Everyone is invited to come. The short lecture will be followed by a discussion and study period.

First lecture is scheduled for September 21, 1990 from 7:30pm to 8:30pm. Topic: "The Meaning of Aikido."

NEWS ITEMS

Sensei presented a demonstration and lecture on Japanese swordsmanship and Iaido at the Pasadena Buddhist Temple on Sunday, September 9, 1990. The lecture series is under the direction of Rev. T. Unno. He is scheduled for another lecture on Aikido in the near future.

On September 15, 1990, Sunday, the members of the dojo will be presenting a demonstration for the Los Angeles Festival at the Palos Verdes Art Center in Palos Verdes.

In August, the Grandmaster of the Omote Senke Tea Ceremony, Master Kawakami Sosetsu, visited the dojo. He was so impressed with its beauty that he asked if he could perform a tea ceremony and seminar for his students here in the dojo during his next visit sometime next year.

PRACTICE

By Steven Tarango

I have been a student of Aikido for over a year and I have made some interesting discoveries.

The most fundamental aspect of Aikido is practice. I see people coming to the dojo on a daily basis to practice. We all come together to share our daily experiences and to train. In our busy lives, we take time out to come to the dojo and interact with our fellow students.

We, as members of the dojo, have jobs, and go to school to enlighten ourselves and work to get paid. When we come to the dojo, we come knowing that unlike our other pursuits, the rewards we receive are completely different. There are no monetary gains, no spotlights, or court room dramas. You practice in relative obscurity, but the fact remains we still come to the dojo. Whatever the weather is, if the boss yelled at us or we didn't get an "A" in our exam, we still come to train. All the obstacles we have to face in life seem to be made a little easier when we practice. All the negatives we encounter are channeled into our practice and they become positive energy.

I see people in the dojo working very hard and that helps me with my training. Aikido for me is not very easy to practice by myself but, with the help of my fellow students, I am beginning to understand the concept of blending and harmony with your opponent.

I have never heard any of my fellow students say anything negative. They sometimes comment on how tired they are from training so hard but we all understand that hard training is Aikido well learned. We all try to encourage each other and motivate one another in our training.

Through practice and training in Aikido, we can hope to achieve not only an understanding of martial arts but a better understanding of ourselves and others.

By Steve Tarango

Editor's Note: We encourage students to write about their practice or Aikido or to submit questions to Sensei for publication in our Newsletter. Thank you.

Thank you, Steve, for the nice article.

Steve Stephanides Enters MIT

Mr. Steve Stephanides enters MIT to study engineering this month and will also be training at the New England Aiki Kai under Kanai Sensei. He recently spent ten months in Japan attending Waseda University and training at Hombu Dojo. Steve is a black belt at our dojo and resides in Laguna Hills, California. Before leaving for Boston, he spent several months in Africa building a church. We wish him the best of luck in his studies and training.

Those who wish to write to him will find his address on the dojo information board.

USAF Registration

All members of the dojo should file membership with the United States Aikido Federation, Eastern Region. For details, please see Mr. Jim Graves and Mr. Kazuho Nishida.

Black belts should also make sure your membership fees are up to date.

Upcoming Projects

We are in the process of planning the 2nd Seminar with Master Hsu Chi. Last year, Master Hsu taught a very successful and popular seminar on Tai-chi. He is one of the world's greatest exponents of Kung-fu and Chinese martial arts. We would like to have him come again before the year end. From October 1st to November 1st, he will be mainland China participating in many national, martial arts events.

We just just received approval that Master Yagyu Nobuharu the 22nd Generation Head Master of the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu School of swordsmanship will visit our dojo sometime in November of next year. This will be a very important event and will require a great deal of planning. We ask for everyone's help and cooperation. This is his first visit and it took three years before he finally said okay.

Before his arrival next year, we must make serious plans to replace our mats and carpeting which have become too old and worn. Actually, the mats and carpeting are supposed to last another five years but everyone practices too hard. We need input for some kind of fund raiser to finance such a project. Please help.

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Message from Sensei:

"TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT, TO ENVY ANOTHER"

There is an old saying, "The mountain doesn't laugh at the river because it is so low; the river doesn't laugh at the mountain because it cannot move."

We can't have everything we want. We know this to be a fact, yet, we still have a hard time, throughout our entire lives, trying to understand or accept it. Even the multi-millionaire, Donald Trump, complains, "I just want happiness and peace." Recently, I saw a television interview of Steven Spielberg, the famous director of E.T. and Stars Wars, etc. The interviewer asked, "You seem to have everything you ever wanted, can you define Happiness for us." His response was, "Please don't ask me, I don't know." He seemed very unhappy. More recently in the newspapers, there is a story of a new rock star who made it to the top very quickly. After achieving wealth and success, he says, "I'm not happy, it isn't what I thought it would be."

We must first understand that our "desires" or "wants" are not bad or evil as most religions (including Buddhism) might tell you. We need these emotions to survive. It is not only the way we carry on our personal lives but it relates to the biological perpetuation of the species as well. At the same time, I hope everyone has their dreams and goals and is struggling to achieve them. But, these same cravings can become a double edged sword cutting both ways. It is natural to have our desires and wants and we should work hard to achieve our dreams but, they must always be understood in a positive sense. Once we become obsessed with our cravings to the point where they injure us physically, emotionally or spiritually or cause harm to others, we have a problem. That is the moment we have to find some way to let go of them.

Oftentimes, the range or scope of our cravings are distorted, we think we need much more than is actually so.

Our recent guests from Japan illustrated this very well. They all wanted to have steak for dinner because steak is very expensive in Japan. But, when they got the steak, they were all shocked that what we consider a normal steak is so big. In their minds, a normal steak is only one-third what we consider normal. At Universal Studios, they got very thirsty but when they saw how big the cup of a large soda was, they were shocked and wondered how a person could drink so much. A large soda in Japan is equal to our small size

in this country. In Japan, people normally drink only one cup of coffee, so they don't have the concept of re-fills for coffee. If you go into a Japanese style coffee shop, they will charge you for each cup. For Americans, this is unheard of. Japanese think that it is wonderful to drink so many cups of coffee for free in America. It is very interesting how relative our concepts are. During dinner for dessert, we had one scoop of ice cream which didn't impress me at all but one member was so surprised and happy to receive so much ice-cream in one serving. One member commented, "Everything is so big in America and you get so much. Truly, this must be paradise." What we think is normal and what we take for granted can be, for another person, very special. When we went to a grocery store, one guest began to buy so much grapes because they were only a dollar a pound. He said that in Japan one small bunch of grapes is about \$7.00.

We, here in America, dream about visited Japan some day because we here that it is an interesting place. Yet, Japanese dream of coming to America.

We can't satisfy all our desires. Sometimes, it is better to develop the mentality of "doing without" than "must have." One Zen master, Sawaki Kodo, often said, "To lose is enlightenment." In other words, we should be happy when we achieve something but we should be happy if we lose something as well. In our daily lives, this is almost impossible, I would say, to achieve. In our daily lives, in our work, we are always after something. That is the way our society is built.

In our Aikido practice, we move according to our opponent's attack. We don't give up or give in to him, yet, we don't collide or try to crush him. We don't take away anything from him as well. We call this harmony or blending together. We like to call this "give and take" but we always become too concerned with "taking" rather than "giving." Through our training, we can understand that "to have" and "to have not" has no meaning because it is essentially the same thing. And again, it is not a matter of "more" or "less."

Don't envy another person's possessions or achievements. When we see that someone has gained something, we think that we have lost and feel disappointment. But, in reality, it has nothing to do with ourselves. In fact, the other person may be thinking the same thing about you feeling you have something he wants.

Because of your envy or feeling of loss, you try to hurt the other person, it is a terrible thing. All of us have had experience with jealousy within ourselves and through others. It can be a terrible emotion and we should be careful of it in our training and in our lives.

We have a very nice dojo but it is not the best nor the biggest. Yet, some people feel a kind of jealousy towards

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cont.

the dojo. Little do they realize how much hard work and sacrifice it was. We have many students and our reputation is very high in the community and nationwide as well. Some people feel badly about this. We are not competing with anyone, we are only trying to do our best within the context of our training. We should understand that rather than wasting time being jealous of others, we should use that same energy to realize our own goals. If everyone could understand this, it would certainly be a much happier world to live in.

To put on an excellent demonstration as we did is a good thing. (But, it was hard work!) I think the public has a higher image of martial arts and Aikido because of the demonstration. Yet, like in everything else, some people, especially other martial arts instructors, I am ashamed to say, feel some kind of envy. What a shame!

If you meet someone who feels this jealousy about the dojo, don't say anything but don't let it upset you or discourage you. You must have confidence in your own training. That is why it is important for you to train and test yourself against yourself everyday through your partners in Aikido.

Two years ago, I began to publish the United States Aikido Federation Newsletter for the East Coast. We have tried to have a newsletter for fifteen years but without success until it finally came into my hands. It has been a success but I realized that it would cause some jealousy from the very beginning. What a destructive emotion it can be. So finally, because of "considerable pressure from various sources" I have been asked to stop. I have been subjected to the same treatment in the Southern California Japanese Sword Society as well, so I have decided to resign that position as President. Rather, than fight, I would rather take one or two steps back. It is an unfortunate thing and I think many people will be disappointed but it is senseless to fight. Fighting is certainly not the goal of an Aikido teacher nor a Zen priest, I believe.

One good thing has come out of this. I have more free time and my heavy work schedule has been reduced greatly. Really, I should thank my detractors. If it was not for them, I would still be overworked. Indeed, "to lose is enlightenment."

I hope you will keep these episodes in mind and warn yourselves against envy of others. For everyone, we have something others desire and others have something which we desire ourselves. That is simply human nature. It should never be a question of "to have or have not." But, it is important to see that "having and not having" is ultimately the same thing.

Several years ago, one student was preparing for his black belt test, and I overheard him say to the others, "If I practice hard by myself, I can show up the others and make them look bad." I became very upset at this and warned him that that was the wrong attitude to take. When he took the test, he was so concerned about trying to look good and be better than the others, he failed miserably. It was really a disaster and I had to fail him. Later, he said it was unfair and quit the dojo. I don't know where he is practicing now.

Of course, the test is hard but there is nothing on the test which you don't know. What you must understand is that your mental attitude is the same as your technique. Your technique is the same as your mental attitude. There is no separation. Within this context, I have seen that the most destructive and disastrous emotion to nurture is jealousy of others. Jealousy does not occur from the outside alone but happens within you yourself as well. It is very important to guard against this in your practice.

This negative energy directed to the dojo from outside or the cravings which develop from within can be washed away if everyone continues to work together and train hard together. There is no stronger power than a united group of people who work together in harmony, practicing and encouraging each other. Some of us are mountains and some of us are streams so we cannot laugh at each other.

PS: Because I will no longer be doing the Nanka Token Kai Newsletter or the United States Aikido Federation Newsletter every month, I wish to expand our Dojo Newsletter and begin a study class/lecture series in the Dojo.

Reverend Kensho Furuja