



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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February 1, 1992

MYSELF AND OTHERS

At the United Nations speech in New York, in November of last year, someone made this comment to the Bishop, "We live in a materialistic world and all we do is think about ourselves. This world is only me, me, me, me. . . . We have no time to think about others or this unrealistic Zen idea of 'forgetting the self.'"

In reply, the Bishop related this story which took place during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha. A wife told her husband, "I love you and respect you very much but when I think about it very seriously, I believe I love myself most of all." The husband replied, "Yes, I love you and respect you more than anyone else but when I think about it, I love myself most of all, more than you." This became a problem with no solution in sight so finally they went to the Buddha to ask his advice. The Buddha said, "I love and respect you both very much but after all, I think I love and respect myself more than anyone else."

When I first heard this story from the Bishop at the United Nations, I was surprised like everyone else. Could the Buddha really say such a selfish thing as this?, I thought to myself. But, in reality, what Shakyamuni Buddha said is so. No matter what we say or do or no matter how unselfish we try to be, ultimately, we are only thinking about ourselves. And indeed, like the questioner stated, perhaps this world can be said to be only "me, me, me, me." At least, in our day to day lives, it can certainly seem that way more often than not.

The Bishop commented further saying, "Because each of us loves and respects himself more than anybody else, each of us must try to love and respect others as well." I think this is very true. We shouldn't fool ourselves thinking or trying to let people think that we are unselfish. Yet, because we are selfish people by nature as human beings, we must try to love and respect others as much as possible. This is the meaning of our Aikido practice - to practice unselfishness in the world of greed and envy. Please don't take this negatively. This is positive practice to cope with our illogical, perplexing world.

In the dojo, after practice during clean-up, I always see the same people working very hard and the same people standing around talking and not doing much of anything. In any job, no matter how small there is always enough for everyone to do especially if each person is trying to help the other. While everyone is working hard, one person just stands around saying to himself, "Oh, everything is taken care of." This person cannot see clearly. And again, it is not to find the easiest job or to be the first one to finish. The one who is fortunate to be the first one to finish with his job or to have the skill and talent to be very quick in what he does has the added responsibility to help those who are a little slower or who are not sure of what to do. This is how we manifest our practice in our daily lives. Only to say, "I'm finish (first), good-bye," in no way means the job is finished. This only means "I have done what I am supposed to do, you people are slower so too bad, good-bye." This is not Aikido practice. I am finished with my work when everyone is finished. When we finish our own work and begin to help others - that is when our Aikido practice really begins to take effect.

In our efforts to help another person, our work never seems finished and we always find just a little bit more to do. However, when we are just looking after ourselves, we always feel blocked or that someone is jamming us or fighting against us.

To practice unselfishness within our selfish natures is the basis of our training.

The Bishop further commented saying, "The Buddha realized that it is impossible to completely extinguish our desires because we are humans. So, the Buddha said to just 'reduce your desires (*Shoyoku de are* - *Just make your desires smaller*)!'"

In reality, perhaps, we can only "make our desires smaller." This can be called the compassionate teachings. But, in practice, especially in our Aikido practice, we must try to become "completely selfless." To become "completely selfless" means to get rid of "small" self and realize our "true" self.

What is this "true" self? It can only be found in our correct Aikido practice. Thank you.

Morning Classes

Monday-Wednesday-Friday
Mornings

7:30am - 8:30am

Instructors: Mr. Curtis Westfall
Mr. Bill Gillespie

PROMOTIONS

As of February 1, 1992

Second Kyu
Abel Perez

Third Kyu
Mark Sprintz

Sixth Kyu
Frank Corden
Ray Yagami
Larry Moncado

Shawn Pak, Chiropractor

WESTERN AVE. FAMILY MEDICAL CLINIC

Sungmin (Shawn) Pak, D. C.
5481 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90029
(Western Ave. & Santa Monica Blvd.)

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Special Discount to Dojo Members

Dojo Newsletter

The monthly Newsletter is free to active students.
Annual Donation for non-members is \$25.00.

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Aikido Seminar

"An Introduction to the Fundamentals"

March 7, 1992

9:30am - 11:00am Katame-waza: Ikkyo,
Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo, Gokyo.

11:30am - 12:30pm Bokken.

12:30pm - 1:30pm Lunch break.

2:00pm - 3:00pm Nage-waza: Irimi-nage
& Shihonage.

3:30pm - 4:30pm Jo.

There will be no regular classes on this day. Seminar fee is \$20.00 for non-members. Members: \$15.00.

Optional Japanese style box lunch (Maku-no-uchi bento) can be ordered for lunch. \$10.00 per person.

Registration and lunch order deadline is March 3, 1992.

Please bring your own bokken, jo & tanto.

All Aikidoists welcome.

ALCA Japanese Cultural Lecture Series #3:

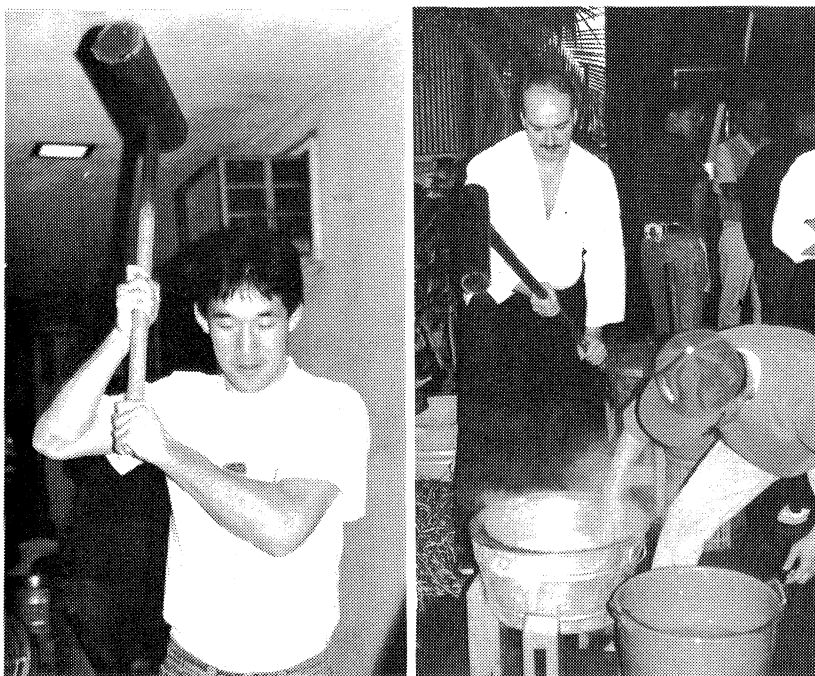
LECTURE ON JAPANESE SWORDS
"Saidan Mei - Cutting Tests"

February 9, 1992

1:30pm to 3:30pm

Donation: \$8.00
Senior Citizens: \$3.00

Lecture: Rev. Kensho Furuya



Mochi-tsuki (Rice Cake Pounding) on December 29th. Ken Watanabe and members of the Iaido Section participated at Zenshuji. Mochi-tsuki is considered good luck for the New Year.

Promotional Fees

Students receiving promotions should pay their promotional and certificate fees as soon as possible. Kyu grades are \$25.00. Dan grades are \$75.00.

NEWS ITEMS

The San Francisco Aiki Kai re-opened and there will be a grand opening ceremony and seminar on February 29th-March 1st.

Sensei has been elected into the Board of Directors of the Greater Little Tokyo Anti-Crime Association which will serve the Little Tokyo and downtown Los Angeles area.

Mitsuko Yoshimoto returned from her trip to Japan. She was able to practice at Hombu Dojo in Tokyo and with Suganuma Mori Sensei in Kyushu. "I had a great time," she said.

On February 23rd, the black-belts will be giving a demonstration of Aikido at the Pasadena Buddhist Church in Pasadena for their Sunday School children.

MESSAGE TO INSTRUCTORS

Before class begins, be sure the entrance way, inside and outside the door, is swept or, at least, clean. In traditional dojos, the neatness and cleanliness of the entrance (*genkan*) indicated the degree of discipline and training inside. A good martial artist would never stop at a dojo where the entrance was unkept. In this way, the entrance is often considered the "pride" of the dojo. Please help to keep it clean and neat which is not easy with two furry dogs.

In these difficult times, crime will rise. Inform all students to park in a safe area and leave nothing visible inside. Ladies should be escorted to their cars at night after practice (by black-belts or any male students). Please do not park in front of Unit #9.

For month of February:

Please emphasize Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo & Yonkyo from Katate-tori (ai-hanmi & gyaku-hanmi) one hand grab (katate-tori) and shoulder grab (kata-tori).

Also, introduce a little suwari waza, shomenuchi ikkyo and shomenuchi irimi-nage.

In addition, beginners a little more ukemi practice so rolling across the mats should be increased to 5 to 6 times instead of 1 or 2 times.

NOTHING NEEDS TO BE ADDED: NOTHING GET CLOGGED UP

By Rev. Aoyama Shundo, Zen Seeds

On *risshun*, the first day of spring according to the lunar calendar, I arranged a branch of plum blossoms, just about to open, in a vase in the alcove. The joy from this first breath of spring filled my heart, and I felt it to be the ultimate of luxuries. Time after time I had stood under the boughs of the plum tree in the frigid air, thinking to myself how slow they were to blossom. Only a person who has waited impatiently for the slightest faint swelling in the buds will know this joy. I am able to find joy here because the gardens and fields in my temple accord with nature and its constant revolution of spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

Throughout the year, florists and grocers sell a great variety of flowers and vegetables raised in the greenhouses. Children growing up in an environment out of touch with nature are totally unable to recognize the promise of flowers blooming in early spring, despite bitter cold, or grasses flowering in the gentle autumn wind.

At the store, flowers bloom out of season and all kinds of fruits and vegetables are on display the whole year round. In the modern world, the thrill of seeing flowers bloom after a long winter, or the feeling of autumn, cannot be experienced. Much less do we know the joy of picking the very first tomatoes and cucumbers of the season, or of tasting them after offering them on the Buddhist altar at home. We no longer know the joy of scooping up a fish in a net while our legs are being pulled by the stream; we do not feel pity when it dies.

From the beginning, we are cut off from the natural environment, which cultivates these emotions in our hearts, and it all starts with the idea that we can get anything we want with money. That cannot enrich emotions. As the words "Mother Earth" suggest, human beings are the earth's children, nature's children. What kind of adults will modern children become, deprived of such a vital sense of nature, raised in an arid environment? In what direction is such a society as they will build going? Just to imagine it sends chills up my spine.

What has produced this environment? Our desires - always wanting to see the flowers we love and to eat

our favorite fruits and vegetables - became entangled with another common human desire, that is, to make profits. To fulfill those desires, scientific technology has been utilized without control. In the end, everything is made available for commercial sale, resulting in an inherently lifeless world. We must not forget that the thoughts of people living in such a situation gradually grow more materialistic, lack emotions, and become, if figuratively expressed, plasticized. For a plasticized heart ignorant of life and death, the Buddhist teaching that these lead to the pure realm of nirvana can make no sense.

Zen Master Kosho Uchiyama said, "The original Way needs nothing to be added, nor is it clogged up. It perfectly suffices in itself. Because human beings have the ability to think, they always want to add something, and soon everything gets clogged up." Civilization today is clogged up as a result of the human desire to add more and more. Unless we change direction, before long there will no longer be human beings on our planet.

...we must revive the human heart that is moved by one flower, a heart that cries at the death of an insect. Such a heart takes great care of one's own life, other people's life, and life in all things.

From T. Shimono,
Bothell Washington
2-3-92

Dear Furuya Sensei:

Thank you so much for your Newsletters. Although I am not directly involved in any martial arts, I always enjoy reading your newsletter. There always seems to be a lesson or a "bit of wisdom" that makes me see my own life in a slightly different light or angle. My 10 year old son is involved in Karate (Shit-ryu) so I try to pass your message on to him (Like, "When Showing Respect to Others, Never Be Outdone" - From your Nov. '91 Newsletter).

Please find enclosed my check for \$35.00 I know your annual subscription is \$25.00. (Yes - Please renew my subscription!) But I want to contribute the balance to your dojo.

Thank you again for an excellent newsletter and your inspiring words!

Your friend, T. Shimono