



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

# NEWSLETTER

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**Volume VI. Number 1.**  
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## **NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS**

*"Shin-nen akemashite o-medeto-gosaimasu."*

I would, first of all, on behalf of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles, like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year and the very best of success, good health and prosperity for 1991.

I would also like to thank all of my Black Belts for all of their help and assistance this last year. I would also like to thank all of my students for training hard and really supporting our dojo.

In 1991, we should all work hard together and really try to put the teachings of Aikido into action. We should develop ourselves, mentally, spiritually, and physically, as we are helping others to develop themselves.

I think that we have really come to realize how small the world has become this last year. This is due to our economy which seems to be getting tougher and tougher to handle for ourselves and the problems in the Middle East which bring the threat of another war. Also, life seems to be getting rougher and rougher in this shrinking world. We go to work but it doesn't seem to get us anywhere. We fight with our co-workers and our bosses, and no one seems to understand us. Our lives seem lonely and unfulfilled at home and somehow, life, in general, seems to have lost its meaning. We are bored and we seek happiness. With the sad realization that we can never escape our lot, we seek distractions and escape. For some people, their only concern is to make other people just as unhappy as themselves. Whatever we do, happiness and success always seem to be beyond our reach. This is the fragmentation of our lives. As we divide our lives

into bits and pieces, we become more confused and increase our desires with the hope that if we get something, it may not just fulfill a tiny part of our lives but our whole lives as well. Some people spend their whole lives grasping at straws.

Aikido teaches us how to live "complete" lives. When we practice Aikido, our problems will not go away. We may still feel lonely and unfulfilled. We still may not get what we want. But, as we begin to understand everything about our lives from the standpoint of our Aikido practice, our lives begin to fall into a single groove, our lives become whole. Our real problem is not facing the problems of life in our everyday lives, the problem is to keep our lives from becoming so fragmented.

We enter the dojo and bow our heads in gratitude for having such a nice dojo to practice in. We change into our uniforms and begin our warm-ups. When class begins, we bow to our teacher and to each other in gratitude for having this opportunity to learn and train with each other. We try hard to listen to the instructions and develop our own skills. Sometimes we understand quickly and sometimes we are completely confused. But, it is not the end of practice, we come again and can continue our training on the next day. At the end of class, we bow to each other to thank them for the opportunity of training, of learning, of putting up with our mistakes, with helping us to understand. We are strictly following all the rules of the dojo so that we can create the best opportunity of learning for ourselves and others. We learn how to practice and develop ourselves and, at the same time, encourage our partners in their practice. This actualization of harmony in our Aikido training makes our lives complete and unfragmented. If we understand that our lives are an indivisible whole, we understand that to bring a small bit of the harmony of Aikido practice into our lives is to bring harmony into our whole lives as well. Happiness is a part of our training but sadness is also a

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part of our training. When we brush our teeth, it is a part of our training so we should give it the attention of our body and mind. Any activity, whether it is something we like to do or not, is a part of our training and therefore deserves our complete attention and concentration. Eating deserves our full attention just as watching television. But, washing our clothes and following our bosses' orders at work is also a part of training. Practicing in very cold weather or very hot weather is also a part of training. If we look at everything as a part of our Aikido training, we begin to see how everything is given to us in this world for our own benefit to bring us further in our own self-development. We should be grateful every minute of the day for all these opportunities!

To see our lives from the single standpoint of our Aikido practice, our lives become complete and unfragmented. As our lives become complete and focused by devoting 100% of ourselves to every activity and task in our lives, we may have a glimpse at what true happiness really is.

I hope everyone resolves themselves, body and mind, to train harder this New Year.

Faithfully,

Kensho Furuya

### News Items

Steven Stephanides visited the dojo for training for several days just before Christmas during his holiday break from MIT in Boston. While attending MIT majoring in engineering, he is practicing at the New England Aikikai under Kanai Sensei. His parents live in Laguna Hills where he also lives and his father is a Greek Orthodox priest.

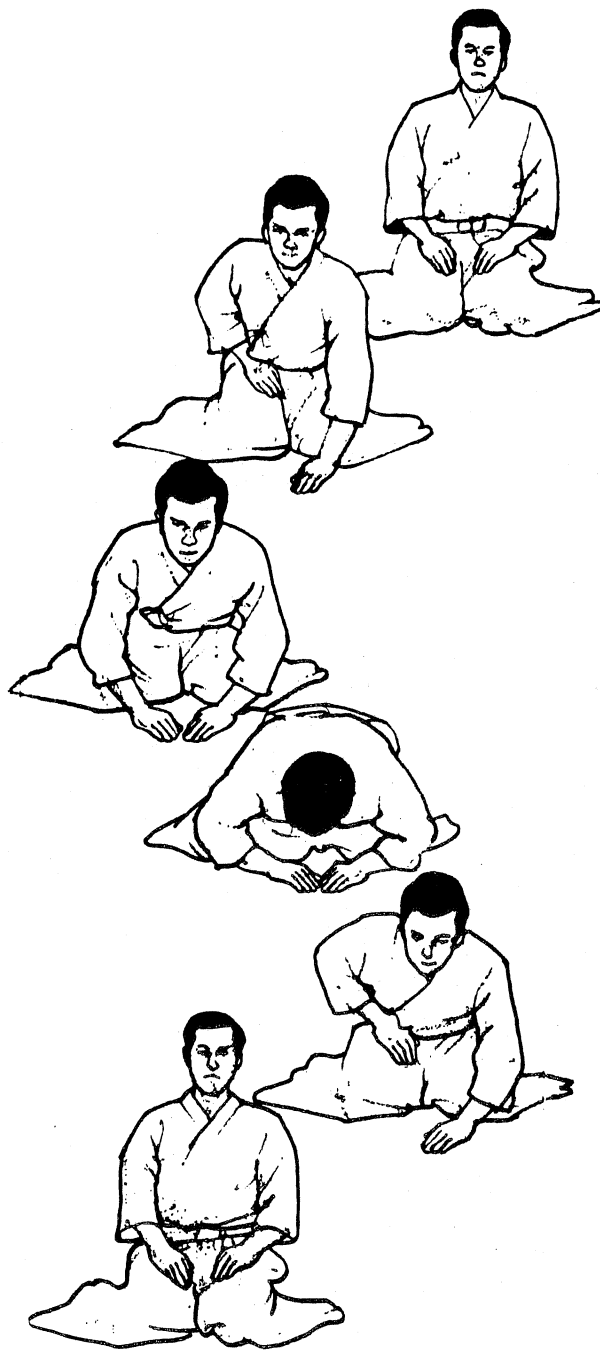
It is said that Tony Gonsalves may be returning to Los Angeles. He will be looking for a new job in Los Angeles after working for several years in Florida for United Press International.

Robert Tam will be spending his holiday visited Mainland China with his family. He left the day after Christmas and will return after the New Year.

Manuel Almaguer who works for the Sheriff's Department, will be transferring to a better position in Long Beach.

### The Proper Way to Bow

It is said that the alpha-omega of martial arts is how to show respect to the other person.



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### **A SPECIAL THANKS**

A special thanks to David Wisotski for pledging three year's dues to the dojo. This helps us out greatly with our problem with Pacific Bell.

Last year, Pacific Bell made a big mistake with our display ad by putting in the wrong ad. They published the rough draft instead of the final draft. After one year of negotiating, they still gave us a bill of \$6,700.00 which must be paid off by a Christmas deadline. David's donation helps us to pay half the debt and make arrangements to pay the balance off in installments. Please see Sensei if you wish to help out the dojo by making a donation or paying dues in advance to help with our Pacific Bell problem. Any amount is most welcome.

Next year, we will only put in a very small ad so we need to think of ways to let everyone know about our dojo. In the past, the Yellow Pages has been indispensable. Thank you again.

### **Feature Articles**

Included in this issue is an article by Steven Stephanides on "Choosing the Perfect Partner." This is his first article for the Newsletter. There is also another article by Sensei entitled, "The Sword of Zen," reprinted from the September, 1981, issue of Kick Illustrated.

Students are encouraged to submit articles for the Newsletter. Students should not try to agree or disagree with the content of the articles written by others but encourage each other to express their ideas as a way to perfect one's understanding of Aikido and of one's self.

### **Subscriptions**

The Newsletter is free to all active members of the Dojo. To non-members and out-of-state friends of the Dojo, an annual subscription fee of \$20.00 is requested. Please send your name and address in care of the Dojo with your remittance.

Free copies are available at the Bodhi Tree Bookstore in Hollywood every month. Students may also give free copies of the Newsletter to those who may be interested in joining our Dojo.

### **Congratulations! Kaz is promoted to 3rd Dan.**

Mr. Kazuho Nishida, one of the senior members and instructors of the dojo, was promoted to 3rd degree black belt or *sandan*, on December 17, 1990 during the recent ceremony of kyu promotions for the students. The promotion is on the occasion of the New Year.

Mr. Nishida has been practicing Aikido over fifteen years and has been a member of our Dojo for the last five years. He lives with his family in Santa Monica and runs the Great Western Car Wash on the corner of Sepulveda and Washington Blvds. in West LA. They do the best car wash in town.

Kaz also practices Iaido and Battodo and is also a member of the All Japan Battodo Federation.

### **Videos - Nisei Week Demonstration**

We still have several copies left of the 1990 Nisei Week Demonstration at the Japan America Theatre. It is about three hours long, unedited. This demonstration includes our dojo, the Zenshuji Zendeko Drumming Troup, kenbu and shigin (Japanese singing and sword dancing), Fumio Demura, Karate 7th Dan, of the Shito Ryu Itosu Kai and the Japan Karate Federation and twenty members of the All Japan Battodo Swordsmanship Federation from Japan.

This was considered one of the most successful and popular events of the 50th Annual Nisei Week Festival and the first major martial arts demonstration in Little Tokyo and the Japan America Theatre. This is a very nice souvenir but there are only a few left. Only twenty copies were made. They are \$25.00 each. Please send the Assistant Instructors.

### **New Training Schedule**

**There will be an additional class for beginners from Monday through Fridays from 5:30pm to 6:15pm just before the regular Beginners' Class. This class is oriented for the very new beginner and will emphasize the basic warm-up exercises, ukemi and other beginning skills. Other students may also use the time for free practice. Everyone is welcome. New beginners are especially encouraged to attend.**

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This article was submitted by Steven Stephanides,  
1st Degree Shodan.

## Choosing the Perfect Partner

December 18, 1990

The instructor is showing shomen-uchi irimi-nage once again. You already know the technique, so you begin to think ahead. Who are you sitting between? Should you turn left or right to pick your next practice partner? The guy on the right is a dud, you decide, so you'll turn left. Have you made the right decision?

This is an everyday question in aikido practice. At first glance it seems trivial or silly, but it can be the source of improved technique or dojo dischord. Since aikido training takes two people, you must always consider who you are going to work with. It is natural, I suppose, to have favorite training partners. Its always fun to work with the guy with the dynamic breakfalls; his falls make your throws feel more energetic and dynamic; and working with a beginner can slow you down on a day when you came to practice with excess energy. The problem is that always practicing with your favorite partners limits the scope of your practice.

Its amazing what you can learn from beginners. Commmon wisdom dictates that, having just begun, they must be taught everything and have little to offer in return (except maybe the possibility of a good training partner in the future, once they learn to breakfall better). Once again, though, it seems that common wisdom is wrong. As anybody who has taught a technique will attest, being able to do a technique and being able to coherently teach and explain it are vastly different things. In trying to teach a technique you will find that you often learn more than your student. When else does a senior student get to find out how a normal person would react to all of these wierd twists, turns and contortions that we do in practice? Believe it or not, it not everybody will through their body through the air to protect their elbow. If your partner/opponent doesen't protect him or herself, you must be able to control the situation, deciding what to do and doing it; helping a beginner to land gently or discouraging an attacker with a minimum use of force.

In developing your technique, you should be learning how to subtly lead your partner/opponent in the proper direction. It is much easier to lead, however, when your partner knows exactly where he is going. That is more of the type of leading that people talk about in ballroom dancing, though. Your partner knows where you are going and willingly goes in the same direction with little or no coercion on your part. I don't think this is what will happen on the

street, though. When working with a beginner, your technique has to be clean and direct. You cannot slop through hoping that uke will make up for your clumsiness. Your technique must also be controlled since your partner's ukemi doesn't leave that much room for error. It has taken me a long time to learn, but I am beginning to realize that in order to be able to do a technique hard you must be able to do it softly.

Often there are people in the dojo who have different attitudes than you as to how aikido should be practiced. When you practice together, the different styles clash and conflicts can result. I do not think that avoiding this conflict by avoiding the person is aikido. Instead, you must learn to harmonize (thus the aiki in aikido) your styles, diffusing the conflict and finding a happy medium. I can't tell you how to do this all the time, but I sincerely believe that in trying, you will learn more about the art. Instead of getting angry and frustrated with your partner when your technique doesn't work ask yourself what you are doing wrong.

There is also something to be said for variety in training. If you hope to be prepared to use your technique in a "real" situation, you should be prepared to deal with all body types. There is no guarantee that the guy who tries to mug you is going to have the same body type as your favorite partner. Learning what techniques work best with each body type and how to make a technique work on physically different people is a useful way to figure out how aikido works. Understanding this better cannot help but to improve your technique.

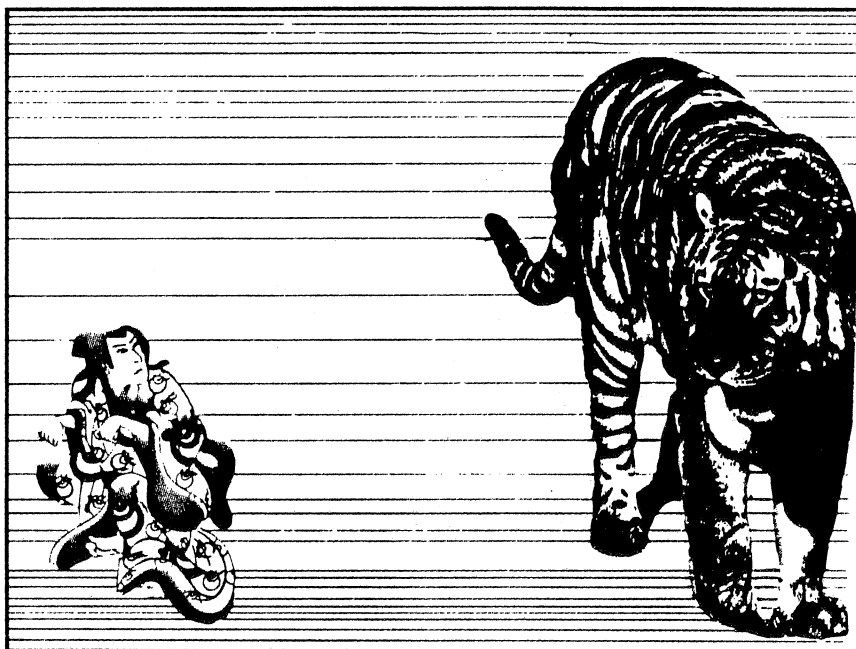
There is nobody in the dojo that you can't learn from. As all students know, learning isn't always fun, but in the long run it pays off. So next time you think about who you are going to practice with, think twice, you might learn something you didn't expect. Granted, this is sometimes easier said than done. I know I have trouble with it, but in the long run, I really believe that trying to work on this will help you.

## "The Sword of Zen"

Reprinted from: **Kick Illustrated**. September 1981 Issue.

### THE SWORD OF ZEN

By Daniel M. Furuya



In the year 1339, it was during a late evening in winter when Shotaku was making her way home from a meditation session with her Zen master at Enkakuji Temple in Kamakura. A bandit, marking her as an easy prey and attracted by her beauty and vulnerability, approached and threatened her. Suddenly, Shotaku took out a small piece of paper from her kimono and, rolling it up and holding it like a sword, thrust it at his eyes. Surprised, he came forward again, this time drawing his sword to attack and cut her down. At that moment, she gave out a great kiai, making him drop his sword and fall to the ground. She struck him again with the piece of paper. Somehow, he felt like he had been cut through with a real sword. Shocked by her spiritual strength and utterly defeated by her "paper sword," he turned and fled for his life.

Shotaku was the wife of Sakurada Sadakuni, a great warrior who was slain by Nitta Yoshisada. Shotaku later gained enlightenment through her Zen training and became the third master of Tokeiji Zen Temple. This incident is recorded in the *Kattoroku*, first published in 1543 by the great military general Uesugi Kenshin.

Zen has always had a strong relationship

with the warrior class since its introduction to Japan during the 12th century. Most scholars believe that the warriors were attracted because they lacked the educational sophistication to appreciate the elaborate rituals and intricate philosophies of the established and traditional Shingon and dai sects of Buddhism. Although this is correct to a certain extent, for the most part, we believe that the warriors were primarily attracted to the great spiritual strength and mental prowess of the Zen master. The Zen master taught simple meditation and the direct experience of enlightenment without words or books. It practiced the total experience of uniting the mind and body into a single, unified whole. It was this power that the warriors were seeking. On the battlefield, they required a tranquil mind yet one filled with spiritual force to overcome all obstacles. They still meet death in a brave and noble manner.

The third Tokugawa Shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, was a great patron of the martial arts during the 17th century and it was through him that the martial arts flourished in Japan during a time of peace. Iemitsu's primary instructor was Yagyū Munenori of the Shinkage Ryū, and his Zen master

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### **Success**

Steven Seagel, the star of "Above the Law" and "Hard To Kill" is featured in the LA Times of December 23, 1990. He just bought a 80 acre ranch with a 6000 square foot ranch house for \$2.85 million and added another 100 acres for \$1.75 million.

Wish him the best of luck. We all measure success in different ways.

### **Thank you**

I would like to thank many students and friends for their Christmas cards and thoughtful gifts.

"The Sword of Zen" continued:

#### **TALES OF THE ORIENT Continued**

Takuan who, during this time, wrote two famous classics on the martial arts and Zen, the *Taiaki (Record of the Taia Sword)* and the *Fudo Chishin Myoroku (The Mysterious Record of the Mind of Immovable Wisdom)*.

One day in 1643, the ambassador of Korea presented Shogun Iemitsu with a great tiger. Iemitsu, impressed with the fierceness of the tiger, wanted to test Yagyu's skill and mastery of swordsmanship. He ordered Yagyu to enter the cage unarmed and pat the tiger on the head. Yagyu refused at first but had no recourse but to obey the command. Drawing his fan, he cautiously entered the cage; sweat broke out all over his body. Finally gaining psychological control over the tiger, he inched close enough to touch the tiger on the head and immediately jumped out of the cage. His hand was visibly trembling.

Takuan was smiling. Yagyu did not want Takuan to have the better of him so he suggested another test of the power of Zen. Iemitsu was intrigued with the idea and ordered Takuan to enter the cage also. Takuan, completely unshaken, entered the cage, spit into his hand and held it out to the tiger. The tiger sniffed at it and looked up at Takuan. Takuan patted the tiger on the head three times and walked out of the cage. Takuan commented that although the tiger looked ferocious it was really quite a cute pet. Iemitsu was impressed. Yagyu, sighing, said, "After all, who can compete against the sword of Zen?"

*Zen Sayings of Homeless Kodo:*

### **Returning to the Self**

Sawaki Roshi: You can't exchange farts with anyone, right? Everyone has to live his own self. Who is good looking? Who is smart? You or I? There's no need to compare yourself with others.

Uchiyama Roshi: Sawaki Roshi devoted his whole life to zazen. How did he describe it? In his early teaching, he often said, "Zazen makes the self into the self," and "To do zazen is to become familiar with the self." To do zazen is to cast off everything and just sit, making "the self into the self."

Soon, final and entrance exams will be given in the schools. Some students will attempt suicide because of their poor grades on the exams. Today's educational system only teaches competition. It does not teach how to return to the self. That's why such tragedies occur.

Whether you defeat others or you are defeated by them, you live out the self which is only the self. You never become someone else. Without being concerned about success and failure, go back to the self. Zazen is the practice in which you "let go of all associations, and put all affairs aside." The Buddha said, "Make yourself your refuge, walk in the world and be unchained from everything." Dogen wrote, "To study Buddhism is to study the self." Without being pulled every which way through comparing yourself with others, settle down to the true self. According to Buddha's teaching, this is the essential way to pacifying the mind. It is the purest zazen.

Sawaki Roshi: Sit firmly in the place beyond any question of whether you are great or not.

From: "The Zen Teaching of 'Homeless' Kodo." By Kosho Uchiyama. Translated by Shohaku Okumura.

Note: This book will be available soon to students of the dojo. It is privately published and not readily available. Sawaki Kodo Roshi or "Homeless" Kodo was the Zen master of Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei, 9th Dan Aikido, of Hombu Dojo, of the greatest masters of Aikido in the history of Aikido.

Ohsawa Sensei is one of the strongest supporters of Hombu Dojo and the top advisor to Doshu as well as being the Head Instructor of Hombu until the succession of Ueshiba Moriteru, Doshu's son. Presently, Ohsawa Sensei is recuperating from a long illness. He was Sawaki Roshi's student of 19 years.

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## Promotions as of December 16, 1990

### 1st Kyu

Ismael Araujo  
Curtis Westfall

### 2nd Kyu

Shawn Pak  
Eric Rodriguez

### 3rd Kyu

Mark Page

### 4th Kyu

Monica Alvarez  
Sam Onate  
Robert Tam  
Robert Masuda  
Gus O'Hare  
Armand Bytton  
Gary Chang

### 5th Kyu

James Hemseth  
Paul Williams  
Frank Mattox  
Johan Bey  
David Ito  
Karen Collias  
Ann Enomoto  
Kevin Arnold  
Daniel Restuccio  
Wayne Murphy  
Brian Kanegawa  
Ronald Cicero  
Rick Parent  
Joe Quinn

### 6th Kyu

Steve Hoskinson  
Laura Scott  
Rodney Craig  
Dan Wong  
Stephen Jones  
Jon Becker  
Marcel Labbe  
Craig Miller  
Shirlynn Cortez  
Sean Marshall

Rei Young  
Sam Willis  
Leo Mora  
Andy Velarde  
Carson Brucker  
Greg Rzonca

Approved by Kensho Furuya, Chief Instructor

## Soto Zen Journal

Furuya Sensei helps edit the Soto Zen Journal published by Bishop Yamashita of the North American Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism. This may be of interest to students of the dojo.

It is \$20.00 per year for six bi-monthly issues. Please send your remittance in care of the North American Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism, 123 South Hewitt Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012. Or see Douglas Firestone in the Dojo.

## Congratulations

Congratulations are in order for Mr. Shawn Pak and his wife who just had a baby boy named Dustin after Dustin Hoffman. Shawn is an excellent chiropractor and has just moved his office to Gardena. Best wishes from the Dojo.

## Year of the Goat

This is the year of the Goat. Goat years are 1907, 1919, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015. It is the eighth sign of the Oriental horoscope.

Goat characteristics are: Invention, sensitivity, perseverance, whimsy, good manners, and taste.

For more information, refer to "The New Astrology" by Suzanne White, 1986.