

羅府合氣道学院古屋道場



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

NEWSLETTER

940 E. Second Street #7
Los Angeles, California
90012

(213) 687-3673

Celebrating Our 30th Year

November 1, 1993

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NEW BUDO STUDY SERIES BEGINS

This month on November 12th, from 7:30pm-8:30pm, the dojo will be debuting The Budo Study Series which will continue on the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month in the dojo through 1994. Everyone is welcome to participate.

The program will begin with a detailed and careful study of: the Life and Art of Miyamoto Musashi, the Swordsman, and The Book of Five Rings (*Gorin-no-Sho*).

The Study Series has been established to give Aikidoists a better understanding of the roots, theory and philosophy of martial arts to enhance and deepen their training. Also, as students beginning to advance in their practice or as black belts who intend to begin teaching, it is extremely important to have a more extensive background and a much more broader understanding of martial arts in general.

We will be using various texts however these texts are riddled with errors, deletions and misinterpretations which has also led to confusion about martial arts in the past. We hope to correct many of those errors in this program.

Continued on page 3.

Sensei's Message:

COMMITTMENT

Continued from October, 1993 Issue.

In last month's issue in the article, "To Be Committed," we talked a little about "inconvenience." In this world of "convenience," we have forgotten how to put out one's self for another or to go to a little trouble or sacrifice one's self for a friend. We are too worried about ourselves or we very conveniently cop-out by saying, "Oh, it's too much trouble." Nowadays, because something is "too much trouble," it seems to be reason enough to forget about it. I see this all too often.

The Confucians pose an interesting question. If you took your own son and your friend's son on a boat ride and suddenly the boat capsized and you realized that you could only save the life on one child from drowning, which child would you save? Your own or your friend's? According to our "logic," we would save our own and make an excuse about the loss of your friend's child and forget about it, I think. Under Confucian rule, we would save the child of our friend first, despite the loss of our own. I don't know how this works in real life, because we are not masters of our own feelings and perhaps may do the "wrong" thing. Yet I think the Confucian thinkers of old wished us to understand, at the very least, the feeling and sentiment of this problem.

Among the Samurai warriors, there is this well known saying: "When I consider my life, I think of it as having the weight of a single strand of hair. When I consider the duty to my liege lord, I think of it as having the weight of 10,000 mountains."

Another point about Commitment is continuity or perserverence.

Have you ever looked closely at a bottle of Kikkoman soy sauce? You will be surprised at the date when they first began business. It is hard to believe they

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COMMITMENT continued:

still in business to this day. It is the same if you go to the some department stores in Japan like Takashimaya. It is common to see stores such as these established over 300-400 years ago. The tea I drink comes from a tea shop in Japan that was established over 800 years ago and is still going strong today. I thought it was very sad when, a couple of months ago, the I Magnin department store on Wilshire Blvd. was closed. This is considered one of the most beautiful architectural structures in Los Angeles and one of the most beautiful examples of art-deco work in the country. What a shame!

Although there are many Chinese restaurants in Los Angeles, I often go to the Far East Cafe in Little Tokyo. It has not changed since my mother used to go there with my grandparents about 60 years ago. My mother was only 15 years old then and First St. was still a dirt road! I have known the current owner there all of my life. He is the son of the owner who used to served my mother and grandparents.

Although there are many copying facilities in downtown LA and Little Tokyo, I still go all the way out to Hollywood to Copies Unlimited for my needs. I started going there in 1975 when my school was not too far from there. Now, I think I am one of their oldest customers. Although it is a little inconvenient to drive so far now that I am in Little Tokyo, I think they appreciate my loyalty and always give my 1st class service where I can't get anywhere else. It is the same with our keiko-gi supplier. I remember when he first started business and used to call me once in a while to buy uniforms because he had no business at all. Now, he is a most succesful multimillionaire and when I call, I always get a much different reply: "Sorry, we're all sold out. Let me make a back-order for you!"

Apologies

Suganuma Sensei sends his deepest apologies for the cancellation of the October Seminar due to pain from a chronic back injury. He has made tentative plans to visit the dojo in the early part of next year when he also visits the Chicago area.

The ACLA also apologies to everyone for any inconvenience caused by Suganuma Sensei cancellation. Thank you for your understanding and patience in this matter.

Although now he has thousands of customers and I am only a very small buyer, we always get very special treatment and consideration.

Nowadays, everyone comes and goes so fast, I think it is very hard to make strong and lasting relationships with anyone. I think it causes a great deal of loneliness and insecurity because we never know where we or anyone else is, for that matter, from one day to the next.

I remember on one occasion I saw a very beautiful 500 year old Japanese painting of a famous temple. What surprised me so much is that you can see this very same temple today and you can still stand in the very same spot the artist stood so many years ago and see exactly what he saw.

Although I feel very old when I think about it, we have two very special members in the dojo. Dan Yoshimura in the Kenshinkai who studied in my children's class about 27 years ago and James Doi, one of our senior instructors, who was in my USC Aikido class about 26 years ago.

Commitment is not commitment without the commitment of the passing years.

We want to make our dojo is a lasting one seeing students coming and going and coming back again after many, many years. This is the faithful commitment of the dojo to the students. The relationship between dojo and students should be nothing less than the everlasting friendship of friends. Continued.

Important Dates:

November 1st: Monthly Dues.

November 5th: Sword Study Class Kenshinkai.

November 9th: Black Belt Meeting 8:30pm.

November 12th: Budo Study Class 7:30pm.

November 20th: Iaido Intensive 6:30am.

November 25th. Thanksgiving. Dojo closed.

November 26th: Budo Study Class 7:30pm

**Please pay your dues on time.
Your support and contributions are vital to us.
Thank you.**

LETTERS:

I attended the demonstration at the Japan America Theatre in Little Tokyo in August and enjoyed it very much. I planned my vacation from work the week of August 8th just so I could attend this special event.

I am a 37 year old male and would like to study Aikido. Can you help me? I have been interested in the art for many years but can't find a place here. . . .

Tracy M. Smith
Birmingham, Alabama

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you and your group for participating in the demonstration portion of the program this year. Your demonstration of Aikido and Iaido surely enhanced the overall program of our 1993 Obon Festival. . . .

Rev. Noriaki Ito
West Covina Buddhist Church
Covina, California

We received inquiries about Aikido from Ft. Huachuca, Arizona; Sabah, Malaysia; Bombay, India; and Moscow.

Conversations with a Sword Polisher:

This month, Karita Sensei made his annual visit to Los Angeles to visit me. He has a very busy schedule and usually takes care of a great deal of his business in San Francisco and Huntington Beach each year but always makes a one day stop in Los Angeles just for me. He arrived at LAX on October 18th and left to visit his old friend in Huntington Beach on the very next day.

Karita Sensei practices Tai-chi Chuan in Japan and knows our good friend Master Hsu in San Francisco. Chinese martial arts are enjoying great popularity in Japan at the moment and many famous teachers from China are now living and teaching there.

It is very hard to find people to discuss martial arts with so I always wait for his one-day visit each year. We spoke about martial arts from the moment he landed at LAX at 9:30am straight through to when I said "good-night" to him at the hotel at 11:30pm at night. We continued the conversation from 8:30am

the next morning over breakfast until he left to Huntington Beach around noon. We are so long-winded! Nothing was accomplished by our talks, of course, (talk doesn't accomplish anything) but I thought I might share a few interesting thoughts with you which I learned from Karita Sensei. . . .

It is a Tai-chi Chuan boom in Japan. Lately, there are so many great masters of the Chinese martial arts in Japan that you hardly know which way to turn your head. Last year, we arranged a seminar with Master Hsu in Japan at Karita Sensei's school in Tokyo. I think it was only moderately successful because everyone was too enthralled with learning the different forms and everyone was too preoccupied madly running about from one great so-called great master to the next.

Master Hsu teaches his art only as a martial art and, of course, the usage and application of the techniques. Although Master Hsu is very well known in Japan because he has written many important articles on Chinese martial arts published in Japanese magazines, people didn't seem to be so interested in the application and meaning of the techniques as they were the various exotic forms, according to Karita Sensei.

Recently, Karita said, these masters are creating a single uniform form that everyone can learn in order to conduct forms competition tournaments. At the same time, in order to make Tai-chi accessible to more and more people, they have greatly simplified the techniques and movements. These single simplified forms and competition tournaments are the next step in the current development of Chinese martial arts in Japan, it appears.

Two years ago, Karita Sensei attended Master Hsu's seminar at our dojo. After class, Karita Sensei asked Master Hsu many questions about his technique and training. When Karita Sensei demonstrated a particular movement, Master Hsu would look and frown and shake his head and say, "No." Master Hsu would comment: "The purpose of this technique is to thrust here so the sword must be lower," or he would say that the sword should move this way because you are blocking the opponent's attack here. Karita Sensei was surprised how different Master Hsu's art was to what he had learned so far! But, at this time, Karita Sensei was very interested in the modern form of Tai-chi in Japan which they call *sogo budo* or "conglomerate martial arts" which has a little bit of everything. I was so surprised how much Karita Sensei's thinking has changed from two years ago to today! Continued.

Sword Polisher's Talks continued:

Karita Sensei observed that recently many people have become bored with this new-style uniform Tai-chi. He said, "It's just a kind of balancing act." Because martial arts has become a performance act done to impress people, the movements have become very fancy and elaborate but has lost its martial arts application. And, at the same time, as everyone begins to master the movements, each person eventually begins to ask, "What am I doing?" "What does this movement mean?"

As our talks continued, we agreed that Master Hsu was right. Martial arts must be practiced as a martial art or it becomes meaningless movements or a nice little dance. And, as beautiful and charming as these forms are, this often leads to boredom and confusion. There is only so much one can do to impress others and eventually, I think, we have to turn inwards into ourselves to find out what we are actually doing and thinking or we simply use ourselves up.

I see many parallels to Aikido and other martial arts as it is practiced in this country and Japan today. It has, to a degree, become a performance art or "act." The teacher, it seems to me, is expected to perform for the students. This is not a learning experience, it is just another form of entertainment. In addition, we want everything fast, quick and easy. Martial arts is not a Big Mac or an AM-PM hotdog.

We have forgotten the spirit of Aikido and have lumped it together with quick, temporary relationships, MacDonald's hamburgers, instant gratification (a popular word today), "I'm outta here (another popular phrase and today's best way to cop-out)," 7-11 and Madonna. Nowadays, we do anything we feel like and if it is wrong or someone is hurt or loses his life; we simply go to court and become a famous media celebrity. Not only famous, we become rich from the book and movie rights.

If I jump up and down like a trained monkey in front of you and pat you on the head and say, "Your Aikido is wonderful!" I would have ten times more students. Perhaps, a way to become rich. Does it do you any good? Does it do me any good?

Teaching as I believe in will not make me famous or rich either. However, at least, (and this, at times, is not much consolation at all) I can say I am doing what I believe in. As most of us have forgotten, although it doesn't fill your belly at all, faith can be the most nourishing food in the world.

I think we have tried to trade in our spiritual values for modern technology or, as I call it, the "science of convenience." Technology is so much easier. It doesn't require any commitment or involvement. If something goes wrong, we just call a mechanic and pay him some money. The problem is easy to understand as well, a loose screw, a bad circuit, or a burnt out fuse. Only if humans can be repaired and fixed so easily! I think we have forgotten that this process of constant repair and correction of our actions, thoughts and moods is the very act of living itself and only proves and affirms our lives each minute. Sitting around waiting for someone else to do something only causes us to lose our own sense of human value. And, if we see ourselves as profound, mysterious and spiritual living beings, we know that our problems and our experiences can never be a matter of a loose nut that can be repaired with screwdriver.

I recently read a report about the youths of this country today and their lack of spiritual or human values. According to this report, many youths feel that they can only feel some kind of worth by holding a gun. This report stated that one out of ten youths in high school believe that they will eventually be shot by a gun or experience a very violent episode. On television recently there was an interview with a doctor practicing in New York. He was shocked that when normal people are shot with a gun, it is an extremely traumatic experience and cause of great concern as anyone can see. Yet, he observed that most youths take it for granted and almost nonchalantly because they have come to think of it as a part of their lives.

In the effort to popularize and simplify martial arts for the sake of convenience, popularity and, of course, money, we dance around on the mat exhausting ourselves with worthless actions. What we doing? We are only trying to impress others like a trained monkey. We have essentially sold ourselves off and this can only devastate our spiritual worth.

Recently, there was a program about Cambodians who have immigrated to this country. They are refugees of the Viet Nam War who were bombed by our country and invaded by the Communists who tried to destroy them by killing over one million of these people at the Kymer Rouge. It seems natural that they would welcome being in America, the country of freedom and opportunity. On the contrary, they long to return home saying, "The people here are too hard here, too aggressive. We are a gentle people, it is too difficult to live here." I hope I haven't become one of these "hard" people they fear so much. We must really take another good look at ourselves.

BUDO STUDY SERIES continued:

The Study Series will begin with the Book of Five Rings, by Miyamoto Musashi, Overlook Press, 1982.

This will cover the art and life of Miyamoto Musashi and discuss much of the legends and myths surrounding this person. Also, we will discuss Musashi's swordsmanship and the strategy he used to defeat his opponents.

We will continue with the following texts:

The Sword and the Mind, Trans. Hiroaki Sato, The Overlook Press, 1985.

This will cover the *Heiho Kaden Sho* or the "Secret Family Military Teachings of the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu." And, the *Fudochi Shinmyo Roku* or the "Divine Record of Immoveable Wisdom," by Takuan and the *Taia Ki* or "Record of the Marvelous Sword, Tai-A."

The third text should carry us to the end of 1994:

Zen and Confucius in the Art of Swordsmanship, Reinhard Kammer, Routledge & Kegan Paul Press, 1978.

This will discuss a very famous text on swordsmanship, the *Tengu Geijutsu Ron* or "The Record of the Arts of the Tengu Goblins of Kurama Mountains."

We will be discussing Sun Tz's "The Art of War," and also *Zen and Japanese Culture* by Daisetsu Suzuki, Bollingen Press. Which text to be used for the "Art of War" has not yet been determined because there are many decent translations on the market now.

Students should bring a 3-ring looseleaf binder, paper, pen and pencil. You may want to take notes and there will be Sensei's personal notes and translations of important passages handed out on occasion. We hope you can create your own valuable reference study book on martial arts while attending this Study Series.

Non-members of the ACLA are requested to make a donation to the dojo.

Japanese Village Plaza's 15th Anniversary

The dojo help to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Japanese Village Plaza with an Aikido and Iaido demonstration on Sunday, October 24, 1993.

Many thanks to the following participants: James Doi, Mitsuko Yoshimoto, Yasushi Matsuki, Ken Watanabe, Steve Tarango, and Kenny Furuya.

Many Thanks:

Many thanks to everyone who helped with our major dojo clean-up on October 23rd, Saturday afternoon. Special thanks goes to Steve Tarango who helped put up chicken wire in the eaves to keep the messy pigeons away. Also thanks to Kevin Sonico who did a specially good job with our washroom. It was alot of hard work.

The dojo also thanks everyone for their donations to the dojo for Sensei's notebook, "Kagotsurube." The copies are limited so please get your copy soon before we run out.

We thank Andy Kissel, Dr. Cheryl Lew, James Doi and Bruce Ino for special donations to the dojo. Thank you for your support.

Among our new members, we welcome Gabriel Zorrilla, 1st degree black belt, from Mexico.

Also, congratulations to Cromwell Ty who entered UCLA his quarter. As a side note, Master Hsu's daughter, Helen, also entered the same school.

ACLA IAIDO KENSHINKAI

Training Schedule

Wednesdays: 8:45pm-9:45pm

Saturdays: 9:00am-10:00am

Sundays: 7:30am-8:30am

Monthly Iaido Intensive Seminar

November 20th, 6:30am-8:30am
Monthly meeting/breakfast follows.

The Iaido Intensive Seminar is held on the third Saturday of every month from 6:30am.

RAFU TOKEN KAI
Los Angeles Sword Study Society

First Friday of every month from 7:30pm.

Program: Making oshigata and recording information about your sword. Please bring your oshigata equipment.

Everyone is welcome.

BUDO STUDY SERIES:

"The Life and Art of Miyamoto Musashi, the Swordsman, and the Book of Five Rings."

Every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month from 7:30pm to 8:30pm.

Please bring a 3-ring looseleaf notebook and pen and pencil. You will be taking some notes but there will be hand-outs of translations and Sensei's personal notes which is recommended you keep together in a 3-ring binder. Everyone is welcome to attend and join us in our study class.

Text: The Book of Five Rings. Overlook Press, 1982.

Training Schedule

**AIKIDO
BEGINNING OPEN CLASSES**

Wednesday & Friday Mornings
7:00am-8:00am

Mondays thru Fridays
6:15pm-7:15pm
7:30pm-8:30pm (Except Tues & Fri.)

Saturday Mornings
10:15am-11:15am

Sunday Mornings
9:45am-10:45am

**ADVANCED & INSTRUCTORS'
CLASSES**

2nd Kyu & up. Please bring bokken & jo.

Tuesdays
7:30pm-8:30pm

Saturdays
11:30am-12:30pm

CHILDREN'S AIKIDO

Sunday Mornings
8:30am-9:30am

Welcome

All Aikidoists from all schools welcome to join our practice. ACLA Members should encourage their family and friends to join us in our training. Please help our membership to grow. Thank you.

YUDANSHA KAI
ACLA Black Belt Association
Meeting: November 9th
Tuesday, 8:30pm