

SHOBUKAN NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 4

AIKIDO SHOBUKAN DOJO

DECEMBER 2000

THE AIKIDO SHOBUKAN DOJO IS THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS FOR THE SCHOOLS OF UESHIBA • MITSUGI SAOTOME SHIHAN

FROM THE DESK OF

PETE TRIMMER

Tis the season of acceptance.

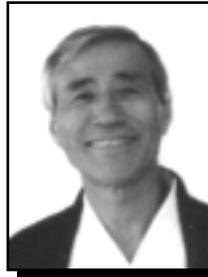
We once had a student here who was my senior by a short time of six months. In attitude, however, he was way senior to me. Being a large and strong person he could and would make sure that I was only able to throw him just the way he liked to be thrown. It took me some time, but I did learn to throw him consistently his way. I also learned to throw other students in the dojo the way that they wanted. I accepted their opinions and learned their ways. They didn't ask me for my opinion and they didn't learn from me.

Our student handbook and dojo rules state very clearly, "The student has no opinion." This is a great learning tool. In classes teachers demonstrate their ideas of how Aikido is done. As a student I endeavor to recreate that aikido as best as I can.

When I teach class I express my opinions of aikido principles in action as clearly as I can. Much of Saotome Sensei's frustration comes from seeing us unable to let go of our own ideas of Aikido and learn his.

This idea can also be useful for expanding our community. It is difficult for some students to come into an established martial arts school and begin the study of aikido. Having the opinions of others graciously heaped upon them, both on and off the mat, makes it even harder. Let beginners in our community come to their own opinions through their own experiences. Accept the fact that they might have different ideas, that they may have studied different aspects of life, other martial arts, or may even learn completely differently than we do. Let's learn from them and in this way we can realize Sensei's wish for a community of over 300 students.

Tis the season.



AIKIDO: ART WITHOUT STYLE

PART 2 IN A SERIES
OF INTERVIEWS WITH
MITSUGI SAOTOME
SENSEI

ASN: Please explain
the concepts of naka-
zume and metsuke.

MS: Nakazume is the study of how to connect the center. Metsuke is maintaining the right vision. There is also kikubaru, or good energy, awareness.

They represent a study of good energy. Most people have no nakazume, and lose connection with uke. Nakazume means, always go in. Always go to uke's center. In shomenuchi ikkyo, many people look up at the striking arm and lose connection to uke's center. Instead, go in, connect to uke's center, then ikkyo waza. If the strike is yokomenuchi and I focus on the arm, again, I lose. It's always looking, connecting.

Nakazume, metsuke and kikubaru all connect and make a triangle. Studying them creates the right attitude and good awareness. If your attitude changes, your perception changes. If your perception is more open, then uke's center is open. Your attitude connects to kikubaru, your feeling. Attitude is important, like having confidence, or knowing how to speak to people, how to talk, walk, or sit.

It also looks good. When your spiritual awareness changes, your physical attitude changes. This is how you make your movement beautiful. Beauty is skill. It is power, not just an image. A person with complete balance is beautiful. You carry beauty in you. This is the most helpful lesson for your daily life. Your physical attitude is not just that: it is spiritual embodiment.

There is truly a need for this in this country. The more time you spend in practice, the more your whole life changes. This society has lost this kind of education. Only the

military has instruction on physical expression. A long time ago, noble families were educated in this.

Education is not freedom. It takes authority and order to make people better. This is real education. In modern life, it's been destroyed. Everything is free, free, free. But children can not be free. They must learn correct behavior, not freedom. Freedom is like an uneducated puppy. There's no discipline in a puppy, and it gets into trouble. Seniors and parents give education, a compass for right actions.

ASN: Some people might say that education is the only thing that gives you liberty and freedom.

MS: No. The most important question for an individual is, what kind of family do you grow? This is the question for thousands of years, in any country. How do you make better people and better leaders, and create noble families? That kind of family truly had no freedom. There were lots of rules: how to eat, how to speak, how to walk. This is very important, but people misunderstand it. Why do we keep tradition? Because children grow much better with it. Also, traditions create respect. People do not show respect if they have no pride. People think that freedom is everything. But children need a compass, to be given wisdom. Children are more flexible. Their minds soak up information very well. If their parents and society gives them a compass, children can go anywhere. This is called wisdom. It looks like freedom, but they never lose their direction. If people have freedom and no compass, they

continued on page 2

INSIDE

- SEMINAR REVIEWS
- AIKIDO AND SELF DEFENSE
- SHOULDER INJURIES
- 6:15 A.M. SUBURI CLASS
- AND MORE ...

don't know where to go. When children have guns and shoot people, society has not given them a compass.

Human brains are different from a cat or dog's brain. Education is most necessary for humans. Dogs learn to stay, heel, lay down, come. We learn how to make a human society. Society is not the jungle. Why do we have ceremony in the dojo? Is everybody free to come on the mat? Do people come in and say, hey, you, teach me? No. Everybody makes a line, claps hands, says onegai shimasu. There is ceremony, respect. Children grasp that it's important. With no ceremony, no etiquette, what kind of society do we have?

Why is etiquette so important? A warrior society, where everybody has a sword, is the most mannered society. Martial arts training is not just technique for survival, it's wisdom. People can't just say, you must respect me. If you respect others, then they respect you. If you say, I am sempai, you must respect me, who cares?

Compare the teacher-student relationship in Japan and the United States. In Japan the relationship is very tight, more so than between parent and child sometimes. I was lucky. I had many good teachers when I was young. Otherwise I was a very brutish, eccentric boy. I always went to the dojo for training and guidance. I had a lot of help.

When I was growing up, the dojo was an oasis. If I was lonely or unhappy I went there. My mother asked me, why do you go to the dojo all the time? A dojo can be a second home, not just a place where technique is taught. That was O Sensei's business. Some people think of a business as how to make money. For a dojo, that doesn't matter. If you're young, old, come here, be comfortable, make it a home. This was O Sensei's vision. He never knew how much income the dojo made. That is why people take care of the dojo. This is your home. You must clean it and keep it in good condition. Don't just pay dues, study, and go. I am happier than other businessmen. I don't like dojos to be commercial businesses. In an aikido dojo, you must like to take care of people. Good teachers are patient, and have love for their students. Just a sempai-kohai relationship is not enough. A good teacher must love people. Who really gives power, and authority? Students do; they give it to their teachers.



PATTY SAOTOME SENSEI

JOHN TAYLOR

From October 27 through October 29, 2000, Patty Saotome Sensei taught a halloween seminar at the Aikido Shobukan Dojo. The major themes of the seminar were grounding yourself through the mat into the earth when you are standing in hanmi and using hanmi to establish and maintain the connection between you and your partner's center.

Throughout the weekend Patty Saotome Sensei used defenses against ryotedori, yokomenuchi strikes, and other attacks to illustrate the concepts described above. She stated that when you are in hanmi your posture must be good and you must concentrate on grounding yourself through the mat and into the earth. By creating such a stable base, Patty Saotome Sensei demonstrated that you would be able to properly maintain your posture and balance and execute techniques with a minimal amount of effort. She also demonstrated that by maintaining good hanmi you should be able to enter and control your partner's center by moving your feet and not by reaching for your partner with rigid outstretched arms.

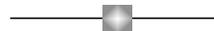
Patty Saotome Sensei explained that as you enter you must be aware of your center, your partner's center, and the center that is developed by the relationship between you and your partner. She emphasized that before physical contact occurs you must understand this center and control it with your movement. If you enter properly and your hanmi is at the proper angle in relationship to your partner's center you can control your partner's center by controlling the interaction that binds the two of you together. She cautioned, however, that if you enter too quickly or your hanmi is facing away from your partner's center the connection will be broken. If your movement is too slow the connection will also be broken. Patty Saotome Sensei used a multitude of techniques to demonstrate the need for you to examine the coordinated movement of your body and the positioning of your hips, feet, and head in relationship to your partner's body. The principles of balance and geometric structure and their proper application will allow you to break your partner's points of balance with your center. They will also allow you to put pressure on your partner's center in a manner that will dissolve your partner's opposing force with a maximum amount of control and a minimal amount of effort.

At the Sunday morning session, Patty Saotome Sensei taught a bokken class and applied the principles described above to

weapons training. She stated that all aikido principles are magnified through the greater extension and distance of weapons training. She emphasized that weapons practice points out weaknesses in technique, movement, and timing that are more easily overlooked while practicing open hand training.

She showed that when you grasp a bokken your arms naturally come together and move from the center of your body. Therefore, it is easier to feel the tension in your shoulders than when you are reaching for your partner with outstretched arms. She demonstrated through the practice of bokken katas one, three, and five and their components, that because of the greater distance between you and your partner, it is more obvious that in order to use the bokken to connect your center with your partner's center, you will have to move your entire body. She taught that in practicing with the bokken you become aware of the limitations of not moving your entire body and extending only your arms to meet your partner's attack, a useful lesson for open hand training.

Patty Saotome Sensei's seminar was a rewarding experience for the participants. She explained and demonstrated difficult concepts in an easy to understand manner and we look forward to her next seminar at the Aikido Shobukan Dojo.



AIKIDO SHOBUKAN DOJO

421 Butternut St. NW
Washington DC, 20012

202/829-4202

www.aikido-shobukan.org

6:15 A.M. SUBURI CLASS

CHAS POOR

Early this year I started coming to the dojo in the morning and doing sword cuts before class. Years ago, I remember, we used to do this regularly, practicing one- and two-person suburi and cutting on the makiwara. I didn't notice it the same way then, but I remember how our weapons practice benefited from this training. I remember how all the suburi we did helped us feel comfortable holding and using the weapon, until the weapon was almost like a part of ourselves. It was then that we began to make progress on the lessons of the kumitachi.

To perfect a motion, one must find a time and a place to work on it, studying and then repeating the motions over and over again. I felt that making a routine time for us to practice suburi would create an opportunity to do this. There is now a suburi class before 7:00 a.m. class Wednesday mornings.

The class has been going on for more than two months now, and I have noticed that besides students' open hand and weapons work getting better, we have to spend less time instructing and correcting their basic movement, both in the suburi class and in weapons class.

Suburi is a great method for people themselves to discover inefficiencies in their movement, and to find the naturalness of efficient movement as it relates specifically to their bodies. Each participant has found the class time becoming both a meditative and personal experience, a time to perfect the motion of cutting with the sword and develop power.

We began by discussing tradition and the background of Japanese sword work. In Japanese, both "ken" and "to" mean sword. So we have kenjitsu, the art of the sword, kendo, the way of the sword, and aikiken—training with the sword to perfect aiki perception. Daito, chuto, and shoto all refer to different size swords. Dai means great or the larger sword, and shoto is the small sword. Bokken and bokuto literally mean the same thing: a wooden sword. The suburito is a sword used for suburi. It is generally heavier than a bokken. One may hear other names, such as kaisuburito, hakusuburito, or jigen suburito. Kai and haku refer to the exact shape and size of the bokken. Jigen refers to a particular kind of bokken used by students of the Jigen school, a kendo/kenjitsu style of fencing from Kyushu, in southern Japan.

There are many varieties of suburitos. A subu-

rito is typically distinguished in that it is much thicker at the blade portion of the weapon than it is at the handle. The funagata is common and comes in two lengths, 3.5 and 3.8 shaku (one shaku equals 11.93"), and has about the same width down its entire length. The datsukaku is octagonal, the daen is oval shaped, the kaigata is oar shaped, and the musashi, shaped after the wooden sword Musashi fashioned out of an oar in the famous battle of Ganryujima, is 4.2 shakku long. The katate is for use with one hand. Some people even use sand filled pipes. Most of us use a heavy bokken, but one that is not so heavy it will cause injury. Why? A heavy weight magnifies the problems of misalignment, excessive use of force, tight shoulders, uncoordinated breathing, improper grip, poor posture, balance of weight, improper hanmi, and jerky movement. The heavier weight amplifies all our senses.

We begin each class by addressing questions, going through a checklist of the basics of suburi technique, and mentally focusing. Then the process of unifying mind, body, and spirit begins.

Doing a large quantity of sword cuts doesn't help unless each cut is done mindfully, and with a contemplative attitude, while listening to our bodies and making adjustments. Practice doesn't make perfect—it makes permanent. So we are very careful that we don't develop bad habits. Our checkpoints are the basics (kihon) of kamae, hanmi, metsuke, footwork (ashi sabaki), sword mechanics (ken sabaki). We practice holding the sword, tenouchi, edge alignment, the use of the control and the guide hand, and the body mechanics of the motion (tai sabaki) while keeping in mind kokyū, extension, posture, focus, weighting and balance, orientation and employment of the hips, breathing, continuity of movement, and opening the chest. Every class we get a little better and the mechanics of the suburi are a little easier as we train muscle memory and recollect feelings and images. We try to do the sword cuts with complete extension of energy, intent, and focus without forcing or using muscle, weighting the cut at the monouchi (the last few inches of the blade).

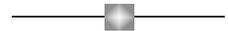
Maintaining an image or concept is important. But what does one think about? What is the focus? Some say to imagine cutting down a person, your enemy. This is the difference between katsujinken and satsu-

jinken. The first is the killing sword, the second, the life-giving sword. We adopt the second attitude. We imagine cutting down our own impurities, like aggression, anger, pride, and ego.

As we do our sword cuts together, we face stress in our muscles, in our grip, arms, shoulders, wrists, in our back, legs, knees. As we readjust and change, we are seeking to create a nonresistant, completely aware state—reflection, a state of no mind. Are we using too much force? Are we cutting from the center? Energy follows thought. Cutting with the center, moving from the center, center initiating the action, developing center.

So far this practice has been an amazing thing. We have learned so much. We have been casting and extending beyond ourselves—beyond the dojo walls—yet simultaneously focusing in our center, losing consciousness, finding our origin. We end each practice calm and close to the Source, ready for the 7:00 a.m. class that follows.

We invite you to join us on the mat; class starts at 6:15 am.



AIKIDO SHOBUKAN DOJO

**421 Butternut St. NW
Washington DC, 20012**

202/829-4202

www.aikido-shobukan.org

AIKIDO AND SELF DEFENSE

NANCY MOORE

A common idea among martial artists is that aikido doesn't provide very good self defense training, at least not in the first few years of study. Doing aikido techniques effectively requires timing and precision, and it takes some time to learn those things.

Karate is often cited as a more effective form of self defense. Students with even six months karate training can probably punch, block, and kick with some skill.

While I don't want to denigrate the value of karate training—I once successfully got away from an attacker with nothing more than an up block, front kick to the groin, and the common sense to run like hell before the guy figured out what was going on—I think the conventional wisdom is based on a misunderstanding of self defense.

We generally define self defense as the ability to fight. But fighting is actually a very small part of self defense. A fight is what happens when all the other options are exhausted. Those other options make up about 99 percent of self defense.

Think about it. When's the last time you were in a fight? Now, when's the last time you saw a group of guys a block ahead of you and decided to cross the street? Or walked into a party and decided you'd better not stay?

Or even sat a few seconds at the traffic signal after it turned green, waiting for the car you figured was going to run the light? After all, avoiding accidents is a kind of self defense—and a very necessary one.

In aikido training, while we're gradually learning physical techniques that will stand us in good stead if we ever have to fight, we're also learning how to protect ourselves in all those other ways.

Some of this is byproduct of training in any physical activity: being more aware of your body makes you more aware of things around you. Some of it comes from, of all things, limitations: training on a crowded mat, as we do frequently in our dojo, teaches you a lot about paying attention to what other people are doing.

But aikido, by its very nature, gives us a greater level of that awareness. We learn that muscling rarely works, that entering too aggressively will raise the level of conflict, that people will do what you want them to do if you let them think they're doing what they want to do. And even while we're struggling to get a physical handle on these skills, we're integrating the underlying principles into our daily lives.

People seem to start using those principles long before they develop much mastery of the underlying technique. As we continue to train, the effects of the principles underlying irimi, tenkan, kokyu, and other basic movements teach us more. Our physical technique improves, but so does our nonphysical side. Aikido principle sounds high-minded and idealistic if we only approach it intellectually: a nice idea, but it wouldn't really work in the real world. In fact, though, it does work. The physical training takes it from a nice idea into something eminently practical. I think you can get some of this same training in other martial arts. I've known some high-ranking karateka who seemed to work on much the same level as high-level aikidoka. But I don't think you get it as early or as thoroughly. Junior aikidoka may not have as great a command of practical fighting technique in their first year, but I'd submit that they have a greater level of overall self defense ability than beginning karateka. They may not fight as well, but they're unlikely to have to.

In the end, the conventional wisdom is turned on its head: if real self defense is what you're looking for, Aikido has a lot to offer.



PREVENTIVE AND RESTORATIVE TREATMENT FOR SHOULDER INJURIES

FRANK SEINSHEIMER

Our shoulders are involved in essentially all aikido techniques. Some knowledge of preventive maintenance and restoration of function following injury for this multifunctional structure is important for healthy training.

The shoulder joint is a linked system of several joints. The scapula or wing bone forms a joint with the rib cage. The wing portion of the scapula glides up and down and back and forth over the rib cage. The scapula also forms the cup portion of the actual shoulder joint which faces the ball portion of the humerus, or upper arm bone. This is sometimes called the gleno-humeral joint. Gleno stands for the cup portion of the shoulder joint and humeral for the upper arm bone. The scapula also forms a bony prominence called the acromion. The acromion meets the collar bone or clavicle at the top of the shoulder and forms another joint called the acromio-clavicular joint. While the space between the acromion, the bony point of the shoulder, and the underlying ball of the shoulder, the humeral head, is not actually a joint, it is a narrow space between moving bones.

Evolution of the shoulder joint has favored extensive range of motion over stability in contrast to the hip joint, where stability has been favored over range of motion. Thus the hip joint is an actual ball and socket with significant bony stability. The gleno-humeral joint is very much the opposite. The cup portion is a very shallow saucer which scarcely contains the ball. Much of the stability of the gleno-humeral joint comes from the strength of surrounding musculature.

Prevention of injury to the shoulder involves stretching before activity to decrease the risk of muscle tears and light weight training to strengthen the protective muscles. Repetitive exercise with gradual increase of intensity is helpful. It would be unwise to go from no bokken practice at all to 1000 cuts a day. Rather, it is better to increase the number of cuts per day in a slow and steady fashion. If you are in a class where you find yourself doing significantly more of any activity than you are used to, do not hesitate to take only part of the class or sit out part of the class to avoid an injury caused by overuse. The older you are, the more important it is enter any new activity gradually.

One common injury to the shoulder in everyday terms is the separated shoulder. This is also called an acromio-clavicular joint sprain (ACJ sprain). This is frequently caused by a fall with a direct blow onto the point of the shoulder. This is a sprain of the joint between the clavicle or collar bone and the portion of the scapula or wing bone which forms the point of the shoulder. A mild or Grade I ACJ sprain will cause minor swelling and tenderness of the acromio-clavicular joint. This usually will resolve spontaneously over a few days to 6-8 weeks. It is important to continue to move the shoulder to prevent stiffness. Training can be resumed based on comfort. A medium or Grade II ACJ sprain will cause the end of the collar bone or clavicle to rise up a little above the acromion and may cause a small observable bump. This can be treated similarly to the Grade I ACJ sprains but has a higher incidence of later problems. A complete rupture of the ACJ is called Grade III. The end of the collar bone or clavicle rises up significantly and the joint is totally disrupted. Although surgical repair is not mandatory, it is often performed to improve long term results.

A dislocated shoulder occurs when the gleno-humeral joint is completely torn out of place. Although it can go in any direction, it most often goes to the front. This usually requires manipulation to put it back in place. It often occurs with the arm elevated at the side, pushed backwards and rotated like you are cocking the arm to throw a ball. Teenagers

continued on page 4

SHOULDER INJURIES *continued from page 3*

who have a dislocated shoulder have an 80% chance of developing recurrent dislocations with minimal trauma which eventually require surgical correction. Somewhat older teenagers (like men in their 30s) who have a dislocated shoulder have a 20% chance of developing recurrent dislocations. It is possible to have a partial dislocation in which the humeral head only slips out part way and often goes back in place by itself. This is called a subluxation. It is possible for recurrent subluxations to be severe enough to require surgical reconstruction.

Impingement or rubbing between the humeral head, the ball portion of the shoulder joint, and the acromion is another common problem. This is called sub-acromial impingement syndrome (SAIS). SAIS is quite common in weight lifters. The shoulder is not designed as a weight bearing joint. When a heavy weight is lifted the humeral head shifts somewhat from the glenoid as the muscles struggle to keep it in place. On a chronic basis this can lead to irritation and rubbing of the sub-acromial joint. If this occurs, basic advice for weight lifters is to decrease the amount of weight lifted and increase repetitions. If pain becomes severe enough cortisone shots are often effective. A small group of patients have actual bony impingement which needs to be treated by surgical removal of the impingement.

It is possible to get inflammation of various structures around the shoulder called tendinitis or bursitis. This often responds to rest, anti inflammatory medication or cortisone shots.

Think of your body as a machine. A living machine, but a machine, nonetheless. If you own an expensive machine, you generally are careful not to damage it. You take good care of it, perform preventive maintenance, and are quick to correct problems. Approach your body or in this instance, your shoulder, in the same way. There is no warranty and the available replacement parts do not work very well.

P R O M O T I O N S

CONGRATULATIONS

ROKUDAN

- Mike Lasky
- Charles Page
- Pete Trimmer
- Chuck Webber

THANKSGIVING SEMINAR IN CHICAGO

EUGENE LEE

This year's Thanksgiving seminar with Saotome Sensei in Chicago was a real training marathon. Sensei taught three classes on Friday, two classes on Saturday, and two classes on Sunday. Placing a great deal of emphasis on aikido goshin jutsu (self defense), Sensei demonstrated many invigorating techniques against punches, strikes, grabs, and kicks. Atemi was often explicitly presented as a method for affecting uke's balance and mind.

The social highlight of the weekend came on Saturday night with the 2nd annual bowling tournament. Led by Sensei, the well financed D.C. Strikers made off with the infamous victory Tenuki. Stellar performances from Sensei, as well as Chris "Twinkle Toes" Royal, Kamenna "Bomber" Rindova and Dharshan "The Shark" Balasingam gave the team its winning edge. Other team members included Eugene Lee and Doris Evans. The dojo must now respectfully act



as guardian for the honorable tenuki until next year. The final words of advice from the Wisconsin dojo (the previous caretakers) were, "Don't let it get a platinum card."

1			2		3			4		5				6		7
		8			9									10		
										11		12				
			13											14		15
16								17		18						19
			20									21				
22								23								
24														25		
			26	27		28				29						
30		31								32			33			
			34					35								
												36				37
														38		
																39

ACROSS

1. A morning class teacher
3. This camp comes once a year
8. One weapon we train with
9. Slippers sometimes worn on the mat
10. Between the mat and the stone garden
11. We should breathe from here
13. It seems to take this long to master ikkyo
16. Ripped gis should be quickly _____
19. When you get hit you might say this
17. We must do this to progress
20. Omote and _____
21. See 14 down
23. One weapon we train with
24. Part of the foot
25. After the pin, the technique is not _____
26. A basic movement
29. Void
30. Swing like a sword, not like a _____
32. The Japanese word for eye
33. Techniques
34. Etiquette
35. Number of folds in a hakama
36. With 7 down: they take care of dojo
37. For irimi, you must move _____
38. There are this many adult classes weekly
39. "I would be honored to practice with you"

DOWN

1. You step onto this
2. A basic attack
4. Frustration can do this to a technique
5. Action star Michelle _____
6. It is not enough to look, you must _____
7. See 36 across
9. Another basic movement
12. A misogi exercise
14. With 21 across: the first two techniques
15. Aikido training is _____
17. The women's room has this many showers
18. A basic attack
22. It grows in the garden
27. During hot summer practice, this is nice
28. Harmonious connection
31. What we do on the mat and in life
32. Period of Japanese Restoration
33. Aikido, the _____ of harmony

合気道

**AIKIDO SHOBUKAN
DOJO**

421 Butternut St. NW
Washington DC, 20012

202/829-4202

www.aikido-shobukan.org