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A wish for the New Year

Sandra Fore

(Formerly of Chushinkan Dojo, now happily retired)

Greetings to you and your family in this New Year. As the year begins with its new potentials, I would like to take a minute to say what is in my heart.

During the past year, sadness has touched us all. Lives have been lost, ripped asunder and altered. "Celebration" seems so unlikely in this year's beginning. What have we to celebrate? Where is the joy?

In many ways, I do not think that all celebrations have to be riotous nor tremendously joyful. Many can be an acknowledgement of our spirits, the fact that we have made it thus far, and of the spirituality within us. It can be the quiet peace that we find in that spark that for an instant forgets the weariness, sadness and sorrow and finds comfort in the moment without thought of the past nor of the future. That instant when our hearts and minds are at rest is a celebration of life whenever and wherever it comes.

I wish you your celebrations, peace, and as much joy as your heart can hold in the coming year. Welcome your celebrations and in that instant, find joy in the affirmation that Life endures, though not always by our wills. □



Jyushinkan students with children's instructor Lara Andersen in Logan, UT for Nakayama Sensei's fall seminar. Saturday morning class was for children and adults. A few children with no previous experience participated.

Aisatsu

James Nakayama

Two-thousand and one, a significant year for our world, certainly one for the Aikido Association of America, and undoubtedly for many individuals. It has been marked with highs, such as the opening of the Aikido International Foundation's new dojo. It has been forever earmarked as the year our founder, Fumio Toyoda Sensei passed away. It has been a year of joy, a year of sadness. Like the laughter that has passed

with time, so too must the tears. We stand with a new year before us, unwritten and tugging at the leash. I say, "Bring it on!"

Recently, the AAA Western Region had added a new affiliate from Washington, Roger Mosconi, docho of Aiki Institute of Spokane. When I visited his dojo last November, a good friend of his, Roque Wardell, docho of Mountain Spirit Aikido in Helena, Montana was also in attendance. Since that time, Mr. Wardell too, has joined the AAA. Those of you who were at the Western States Instructors' Seminar were fortunate enough to meet him there. It is my pleasure to welcome both these gentlemen and their dojo to our organization.

In this edition of Hikari, we asked our readers to tell us what holds them to their continued practice of aikido, year after year. Those of us who have been training for a while know that reasons vary with time. What initially brought us to aikido is not necessarily what motivates us today. How about you - what binds you to aikido? □

What binds us to Aikido?

Henry Oshiro

Orange County Aiki Kai

Aikido first attracted me because of its martial aspect and the physical exercise it offered. The philosophy of aikido was at that time a minor attraction. As time went on, however, I found that the philosophy portion became more important.

The physical training helped me realize that I could not change others. The way the person attacked, I could not change and I had to accept that and blend with that person. I then had to feel what I could do to control or throw that person.

In daily life, I learned to apply this strategy and feel how I could act in any given situation. This has shown me the importance of the philosophy of aikido.

Osensei emphasized harmony and respect, and that we show respect to everyone and be in harmony with them. This is what binds me to aikido now. It shows me how to become a better person, to practice harmony and respect. With more of us practicing harmony and respect, we may be able to influence

others. Thereby, we may promote peace in the world as Osensei had envisioned.

Ron Sims

Jyushinkan Dojo

My initial interest in aikido and early practice was bound by intrigue, mystery, and the joy and wonder of practice. I found another way to communicate with people through physical interchange of energy, another way to understand people. In one way, it was like theater - exploring aggressor and defender roles, learning katas and ways to handle energy, and exploring/putting on an attitude of non-competition. I continued to be bound to aikido through the joy and wonder of practice for about five years.

After several years of not participating in formal practice due to job/career responsibilities, I found out that I was bound to aikido through the desire to practice to become a better human being. Through the consistent practice of aikido, I find that I change, little by little. I change in terms of my attitude toward life (more accepting) and become more and more aware that I need to practice awareness. I find that today I am bound to aikido through gratitude, and I constantly return to that which bound me initially to aikido, i.e., the joy and wonder of practice and the value that it adds to life - my life and the lives of those I interact with.

Derek Nakagawa

Aikido of Rossmoor

We are bound to aikido on many levels.

There is the physical exercise that it provides to improve our health.

There is the mental therapy it provides as an escape from our daily pressures.

There is the spiritual development it provides to assist us in finding meaning in our lives.

Most of all, it is the friendships it provides.



A young Utah student learning his first Aikido technique.

Rod Yabut

Orange County Aiki Kai

My introduction to aikido was unexpected. It wasn't one of those stark revelations or an "A-ha" moment where I woke up one morning and said, "I want to learn aikido today." I am also not the type of person that could be swayed easily into a decision by another unless it is something I want to do. And with no offense to Steven Seagal Sensei, it wasn't his movies either. Aikido sort of met me halfway.

Two years ago, while in college, I had the privilege of taking a survey course on martial arts. I needed an elective to fill a void on my class schedule but to my surprise, I ended up filling a void that I had in my life. The class was Philosophy of Asian Martial Arts. It was part of the Asian-American Studies program at California State University, Fullerton, and was taught by Professor Craig Ihara.

Although I did not know at the time, I was in a personal pursuit for something meaningful to consume myself with. Except for school, I felt that my life wasn't giving me any personal gratification. It was a big routine. Wake up...run to work...go to class...study late...and sleep. Then it's the same thing over again. The only break that I may have had was to hang out

with friends at a party or at a bar, but that became a routine as well. I often found myself pondering if there was anything else for me.

Professor Ihara's class didn't exactly answer the queries of my life. What the class did was hand me my map and placed me exactly where I needed to start. His class dealt with an overview of prominent Asian religions and their influences on the martial arts. This involved discussing the underlying philosophy behind the martial art. One aspect of the class that I enjoyed the most was that every three weeks, a martial art was illustrated to the class. It gave the class a chance to participate, teaching us the basic techniques of the respective art.

We had all sorts of martial artists come and present to the class. Ba Gua, tai chi, capoeira, and wu shu were among the more celebrated ones. It was engaging to see all these styles first hand. Each demonstration consisted of a brief history and of course: the kicks, the punches and the techniques. But when Dan Kawakami Sensei came to present aikido to our class, I got caught off guard by what he presented. Instead of kicks, punches and techniques, Kawakami Sensei took us through a sitting in zazen. Anxious to see aikido's methodologies, I said to myself, "OK, maybe we'll do the techniques after we meditate."

I was shocked to have meditated for the entire class! That was the first time I have ever done such a thing. While I was struggled to keep my legs awake, I had a myriad of questions running amok through my mind. What was this art that gave emphasis to your midsection as the most powerful point of your body? What was this art that emphasized breathing as the most important technique you could do? I was awestruck. And more importantly, it made me curious.

Since I was the only person in class that did not have a martial art background, I had to do a research paper while everyone else demonstrated the art of their choice. Being of Filipino descent, I wanted to do my paper on Filipino Martial Arts. But I told Professor Ihara that I wanted to change my report to aikido since Kawakami Sensei's demonstration left me longing for more. Professor Ihara directed me to this book called *The Secrets of Aikido* by John Stevens. Needless to say, I became even more curious about

aikido after reading about the old guy in the cover whom Stevens referred to as Osensei.

After Kawakami Sensei's zazen sitting, I asked him where I would be able to take zazen again. He told the class that he was at the Orange County Buddhist Temple and that he also had zazen sittings at Orange County Aiki Kai. This was where aikido met me halfway. My map didn't direct me to a dojo right away. My priorities at the time would not have allowed me to do so. But I did promise myself that I would satisfy my curiosity and visit a dojo. It wasn't until after a year and half, I believe it was a Tuesday evening, before I would step inside the Orange County Aiki Kai dojo. Although sometimes I wished I started earlier, I don't think I would have my experience any other way.

It has been seven months since I started my journey in aikido. Every part of this on-going journey seems to make more sense every time I leave from class. Although I haven't had the chance to do zazen since Kawakami Sensei's visit to Professor Ihara's class, I trust that my journey in aikido will take me there. All I have to do is follow my map... I mean my heart.

Jim Brinkmeyer
Jinshinkan Dojo

I have been interested in aikido for many years and was drawn to the art at first because of its reputation as the most difficult, most intellectual and most spiritual of all of the martial arts. My initial interest was piqued by its links with Zen, meditation practice, stillness and quiet contemplation.

Many years ago I had read a biography of our art's founder, Morihei Ueshiba, Osensei, and had been completely transfixed by the degree of dedication, spirituality and humanitarianism which were pouring off the pages. This interest in aikido only grew as I came to understand and was intrigued by its wonderful ethic of non-combativeness and the very profound idea of protecting the attacker as well as the attacked. I was fascinated by the knowledge that there was no such thing as a direct attack in aikido, more, that aikido practitioners consider the act of attacking another human being a kind of specific madness.

I had heard, that learning aikido compared in difficulty with learning the complexities of classical

ballet. Having witnessed an aikido demonstration many years ago while living in Denver Co. I could understand why. I was hypnotized by the fluidity and grace of the motions of the black belts performing their exercises. The ki demonstrations had seemed almost magical and I wondered if this was some sort of trickery. The demonstration which I have now come to understand was randori had me gaping like a child. Seeing the fierceness of the attacks yet the way the sensei moved like a dancer through the melee and casting bodies in his wake was awe inspiring.

There are two remaining factors to speak of: first, the stylized formality and ritual of aikido. Its roots in feudal Japanese culture, budo and the art of the sword as well as the quality of genuine respect and honor afforded to all, instructors and students alike, really spoke to me and struck a resonate chord within my soul. This has only intensified with my exposure to the art and has translated over time into a camaraderie and genuine regard for all my fellow aikidoists. One must possess dedication and perseverance and actual love in order to pursue such a difficult and at times maddeningly arcane discipline....

The other reason for my initial call to aikido practice was for my health. Simply put, I am an older individual in reasonably good health, a little overweight perhaps, certainly much stiffer and ponderous than my younger practice partners. I knew that if I was ever going to explore my fascinations with aikido the time was fast approaching where it might become too late. Coupled with this was the need to find an exercise regimen which I could stay with for the rest of my life and which would help to maintain my strength, dexterity, balance and general health.

All of this taken together, aikido has come to provide a much needed and appreciated degree of formalized discipline in my too hectic and stereotypical western lifestyle. After my brief eight months of exposure to the art in all these facets and so many more which I hadn't anticipated aikido has only exceeded my initial expectations and furthered my fascination.

Ron McDevitt

Orange County Aiki Kai

We start our journey
 Sometimes unknown
 A feeling inside
 Like pulling us home

The surroundings
 A mat, weapons, and walls
 A picture, Osensei
 An uke for falls

It's slow to start
 Our steps unsure
 The feeling is foreign
 The movements a blur

Some nights on the mat
 It's hard to keep sight
 What's it all for
 Why learn how to fight?

If we persist
 If we prevail
 If we keep coming
 The wind catches our sail

It's a feeling inside
 We start to address
 It's not just for fight
 It's a way out of our mess

We challenge our bodies
 We give food to our souls
 We learn the art of compassion
 Not just strikes and front rolls

The longer we stay
 The harder we train
 Each night on the mat
 We confront our own pain

The opponent we face
 Is not high on the shelf
 Nor a dark lonely alley
 But as close as our self

Like a mirror before us
 We see deep inside
 We must work together
 Learn to swallow our pride

The path is of virtue
 Of body and soul

To make us better as people
 To sharpen what's dull

Harmony of spirit
 Is what Osensei was for
 A window inside
 A way through the door

So, if "why do we train"
 Is the question you pose
 Don't look to others
 It's for you to suppose

Train hard on the mat
 Keep open your mind
 And sometime in life
 An answer you'll find. ☐

Summer Camp, Poland 2001

Daniella Molle

Tendokan Dojo, Sofia, Bulgaria

"Why have you come to Poland?" was the first question people asked me, when my confused look revealed that Polish was not my native language. "To practice with you", was the reply I gave. "Do you like it here?" was the question that usually followed, and the sharpened senses of a psychologist could probably detect a slight apprehension in the intonation of the speaker. "I love it here. Otherwise I would not have come back".

On August 11 I returned to Poland, and I hope that I will be able to keep coming back in the future. Practicing in Poland is like swimming in a coral reef - the more you see, the harder it is to come away. With all its challenges, the experience is fascinating.

The force that draws me most strongly to Poland is the spirit in Tomasz Krzyzanowski Sensei's dojo. I experienced this spirit's strength and vitality even during my first visit to the country in connection to A. Sato Sensei's seminar in May 2001. At the summer camp, however, it was manifested even clearer: I was surprised to see that everybody, even those who had gone to bed at about 4 a.m., had got up at 7.20 a.m. to prepare for meditation.



After the seminar: Daniella (left) helps her new Polish friends to pass the mats to a truck outside the window.

Besides, this enthusiasm did not follow a downward curve, but it endured, all through the day, and all through the camp. The willingness to train, to give everything you could give, and to help your partner practice and learn, reached its climax at the kyu and dan promotion tests, conducted during the last two days of the camp. I saw how people, exhausted by six or seven days of intensive training (and maybe a little dehydrated by beer consumption) attacked with such zeal and moved with such alacrity that no nage could ever complain. I know that when you are tired to the bones and all your muscles ache, the only thing which can keep you going (or even running and flying, if I should be more precise) is the spirit - not just your own, but the spirit of the dojo as a whole. - the wonderful spirit of all these people, who had gathered in the small village of Dobrowno to train together.

One of the things that made the seminar such a success was its superb organization. The daily schedule was simple, but taxing and varied. It included meditation, weapons practice, traditional aikido practice, and aikido practice with an emphasis

on tactical applications. We all had to have different expectations and sets of mind for every class. Furthermore, the presence of different instructors made the excitement and novelty even greater. We never knew if Nakayama Sensei would teach the class, or Christine Dyer would surprise us with a great number of related but varied techniques. In the weapons class, we did not know what weapons we would practice with until the last moment. And even if we knew that Germanov Sensei was going to teach the tactical applications class while he was in Poland, we did not know what to expect. At meditation, too, we did not know if we would be able to keep our backs straight and remember that, as Nakayama Sensei said, "meditation is not sleeping."

There are a lot of things I learned at the camp. I learned how to ask for black pepper in Polish. I learned new techniques, and I learned how to put the ones I knew in order in my mind. I learned how to move more efficiently and blend with my partner better. And I learned that the friends I had made during my first visit were true friends.

I saw nidan, sandan, and yondan tests for the first time in my life. I saw Christine do the kumitachi with a nage who was one foot taller than her, and I realized that even tall people may have difficulties sometimes. I saw Krzyzanowski Sensei mechanically give instructions in Polish at a promotion test, before he realized that the uke spoke English and the nage Russian, but none of them understood Polish. I also saw people practicing until midnight the day before their promotion test.

Poland is a beautiful country indeed, with its lakes, forests and fields. Still, it is its extremely hospitable and friendly people that make me love it. They opened their hearts for me and let me become part of that fellowship which always exists in a dojo. They took care of me. They made me feel at home. I am deeply grateful to all of them. □

The Meaning of Exams

by John de Strakosch

Orange County Aiki Kai

(This essay is adapted and reprinted from one that was distributed to the students of Orange County Aiki Kai. Although written for a particular dojo, it may have meaning for Aikidoka of other schools, especially those affiliated with AAA.)

At the Instructors' Seminar held at Kenshinkan Dojo in early December, a number of students were given promotional examinations. They all tested beautifully and have been recommended for promotion. While congratulating them, this might also be an appropriate time to reflect on the individual and communal lessons that can be gleaned from the examination process. The process itself reflects the degree of integration occurring for both dojo and individual.

On the surface, the promotional system seems designed to test the skills of the individual student, and that is certainly a large part of what is going on. The list of required skills for most aikidoka have been developed at Japan's Hombu Dojo, and are used with some adaptation by its member schools. Skill sets are especially precise within those schools that are a part of the Aikido Association of America. This is so because AAA operates under the assumption that methodology (the breaking down of techniques into their component parts) is how we can best learn and maintain an understanding of Aikido.

Testing, at least insofar as it demonstrates increasing mastery of technique, is a way of measuring a student's understanding at a particular moment in time.

Among the benefits derived by the student is the opportunity to intensify his or her training during the exam preparation process and to focus on areas that are most in need of improvement. This is as true if you are preparing for a seventh kyu exam as it is if you are testing for nidan. As a result of intensifying the training, many students have noticed a permanent increase in their skill level as a direct result of the examination process.

It's also true that there is more to testing than meets the eye. It is not exclusively about methodology. I'm referring to dynamics that come into play even if they take a back seat in importance to the mastery of technique. For example, the exam is a chance for the student to work under a different set of energetic circumstances than he/she is accustomed to. The formality of the exam can heighten anticipation, not to mention nerves and metabolism in general. Now the question becomes, in part, one of how the student will adapt to the unknown. No amount of pre-exam practice will fully duplicate the circumstance of the exam itself.

I've mentioned that within AAA there is an emphasis on particular methodology. That does not make us better or worse than other organizations. It is simply a peculiarity of our system of schools. Yet, even within AAA, each dojo has its own unique character. The character of the dojo most likely reflects in the training for exams, in the taking of exams, and in the meaning of promotion within the dojo.

In my opinion, the secret of OCAK success is its heart. For right now I simply want to observe that the heart, the community, and the spirit of our dojo are reflected in the exams that we give in-house (and by this I mean kyu level exams.) Each examination, at its best, is intended as an affirmative learning experience for the student and an affirmation of his/her belonging within our community. Also, kyu level exams constitute continuing preparation for the first dan level.

Now we come to the first black belt level, and the procedure shifts from one that tests the individual to one that tests and demonstrates the individual AND his/her entire dojo within a larger Aikido community.

Every black belt examination is a direct reflection of the chief instructor and of the entire dojo, and the training leading up to the exam is the business of the whole dojo as well as it is of the individual tester. The power, beauty, and competence that Orange County Aiki Kai's Matt Brown and Andrew Sawley demonstrated when they tested in December spoke to the quality of their own work. It is equally true that they highlighted Orange County Aiki Kai and the impact that our school has on its

serious students and on those in other dojos. So these two men have thanked their dojo, and their dojo thanks them. This is as much the work of meaningful character and community building as it is the work of mastering methodology.

That's why at OCAK we are keenly aware that we are a school of Aikido, and also that we are a community of people who engage in a meaningful and ongoing life process together. It is this expression of excellence and of community that we also carry into our examination process. We are in this together, and when our students have been successful, we can say about our community, "Not a bad day's work!" ☐

7th Kyu - Rite of Passage

Jim Brinkmeyer
Jinshinkan Dojo

At first, the techniques seemed amazingly difficult. The Japanese terminology, the need to focus on posture, positioning of the feet as well as the remainder of the body and breathing, left very little concentration to manage the actual moves involved. Little by little, week by week, and with a great degree of study after practice I began to learn, to understand a little.

The requirements for seventh kyu were daunting but I kept after it and practiced on my own. My girl friend drilled me in the Japanese terms for the exercises, attacks and techniques as well as acted as my uke as I walked myself through each requirement until I "owned" them (as my sensei once had put it).

I came to understand that there were two sorts of knowledge involved: the strictly intellectual understanding, with which we are all so familiar, and something which I have come to term "body knowledge". Until my body had come to "understand" a particular technique all the intellect in the universe could do for me absolutely no good at all.

So then, after eight months of particularly diligent and painful practice (my knees still complain after each session) I believed I was ready to test and

asked my sensei when the next opportunity might be. He set a date and I began to review the test requirements almost daily.

Finally the day came for my test and I sweated through each exercise and technique and did my best to follow my sensei's instructions and perform to the best of my ability and knowledge. There was another student testing the same night and I recall sitting in seiza catching my breath, wiping the sweat off my head and neck and wondering if I had done well enough to pass while watching my fellow student go through his tests, his particular challenge.

In the end I had indeed passed. I felt a sense of completion and an agreeable feeling that I had taken on a difficult task and had succeeded in accomplishing it on my terms and with my own abilities. Perhaps a smaller thing for some, but a great thing for this now-confirmed-for-life aikidoist. A new rite of passage. ☐

Aikido Winter Health Tips

Anita D. Spitz, MD

As now is the time of year for "colds" or upper respiratory infections, a few words of advice about staying healthy and training might be in order. One of the best ways to stay healthy is to exercise daily. This will keep your immune system healthy. I also recommend taking vitamins, drinking a gallon of water a day, and using Echinacea and zinc at the first onset of any respiratory symptoms. A humidifier can help keep you healthy in dry climates, but if you have any chronic sneezing or congestion from allergies, don't use a humidifier.

The next step is to protect yourself from germs. The best defense here is to wash your hands with soap and water. During or after class don't touch your face or eat until you have had a chance to wash your hands. A waterless hand sanitizer like Purell is great for this, and can be made available at the edge of the mat.

If you do get sick, rest. Get plenty of sleep and let your body recuperate. Moderate exercise is potentially beneficial, yet you are infectious to others if you are sneezing or coughing. In aikido we

are in very close proximity to our training partners. The best way to help to prevent transferring germs while training is to wash your hands before getting on the mat. If you do sneeze or cough, do so inside your gi top or a handkerchief, not your hands. It is very unsanitary to cough into your hand and then place your hand over your uke's face in iriminage. You can spread germs from your hands either as uke or nage.

Generally try to be considerate of others. If you are really hacking and coughing a lot, stay home and rest. If your symptoms are mild, coming for a workout will probably help you recover faster. But don't forget to wash your hands before getting on the mat and keeping them germ free by not sneezing or coughing into them.

Once again, I hope you stay healthy this winter. Eat your fruits and veggies, drink lots of water and let's keep training. ☐

Anita D. Spitz, MD, a doctor for almost 15 years, is currently in solo private practice in Titusville, Florida. She received her medical degree from Indiana University School of Medicine and is board certified in Family Medicine and Medical Acupuncture. She has been practicing Aikido for 8 years, holds the rank of Shodan, and practices regularly at Enmei Dojo in Titusville, Florida.

You? Simple Headache

by **Steven Wasserman, R.N., D.C.**

What is the frequency, duration, and intensity of your headache? What initiates the headache? What are the associated symptoms before and during the headache? What relieves and aggravates the headaches? Below are listed some of the factors that can initiate a headache.

Headaches can be caused by:

Psychological: stress, good and bad,

Spinal bones: subluxations or pinched nerves in the neck, muscle spasms, poor posture, cervical spine arthritis.

Nutritional: food allergy, vitamins and minerals in diet, chocolate, aged cheeses, red wines (tyramines), smoked meats,

nitrites in lunch meats, caffeine, low blood sugar, amount of water we intake per day.

Hormonal: estrogen and progesterone levels.

Environmental: toxins in diet, toxins in air, toxins in smoking, our own body toxins, hair dyes, gases,

Sleep habits: proper pillow? Proper bed? Proper temperature when we sleep? Amount of sleep we get per day.

Work habits: ergonomics in relation to chair and desk.

Medications: all medications have side effects and many are headaches.

Physical: visual disturbances, need for glasses, proper lighting. Sinus problems, pressure behind face, eyes. High blood pressure, thyroid disease, etc..

For a simple headache, the treatment can be just as simple: eliminate the cause! Do your best to eliminate the above factors and your headaches will decrease. Please note that for any headache that persists or is not your ordinary simple headache, see your medical doctor. ☐

You can catch colds by shaking hands. It's a lot more sanitary to bow!

Alan Drysdale, Chief Instructor, Enmei Dojo

Behind the Words

Christine Dyer

Chushinkan Dojo

Can you turn off the radio in your mind so there are no words in your head? Most people cannot do this voluntarily. Most people don't care - in fact they pride themselves on being articulate and wouldn't want to. Our Zen meditation class is for the few explorers who want to try.

We live by the radio in our mind. Words are our main interface to the world. We speak, hear, and

write them to access the outside world. We use words inside our own mind to think. We love words so much that we mistake them for thoughts. We describe experiences to ourselves with words, even as they are happening. But at the beginning of our lives, before we had words, we still had experiences and feelings. That place behind the words in our minds still exists, a place where words are irrelevant and limiting. The more articulate we become, the harder it is to find the way back there.

Everyone has fragments of pure experience where there are no words - for example, the first glimpse of a spectacular view, the moment a sumptuous meal is set in front of us, when riding the down slope on a roller coaster, sometimes in aikido class. There's a pause in the soundtrack. Then it starts again.

In meditation class, we try to access this mind behind the words. We start by counting each breath and trying to ease our other thoughts away. Every time we lose focus, we start over. My usual experience goes something like this: One..... gosh, my feet are asleep. Well at least they don't hurt right now. Oops. One..... two..... I got up to two. Damn! One....

I have long been unsuccessful with counting. I do better if I focus completely on breathing. My mind relaxes and I can get up to at least three that way. And on a good day, by concentrating on the feeling of the air around me and the mat underneath me as well as my breath, I can shut down the radio for a longer time. When that happens, it's like being able to walk on a railroad rail without wobbling. If you've never tried this, you're missing one of life's great training experiences. If you decide to try it, please watch out for trains....

The mind behind the words is important in martial arts. There is no time for thinking between attack and response. Of course, we train our movements for years until they are instinct, but there is something more. The mind has to be very clear under pressure. If this doesn't come naturally, it can be trained. Some people start their mental training by attacking their minds with zeal. I started out that way. But fighting with the radio doesn't help at all. It gets more insistent. You have to relax into the place behind the words. The more often you visit it, the easier it is to find.

It's only recently that I started thinking of this mind as "the place behind the words". It happened because a friend asked me how I feel about love. I found myself speechless and could not reply, so I went away to think about it. I ended up with a three page essay to tell myself what I thought (so I could write my friend a short note). Here's how the essay began:

"I'm trying to put things into words, and the phrase 'inarticulate speech of the heart' comes to mind. There are a lot of things that happen in my life that do not get put into words. To remember them, I access them as feelings. In fact, I probably don't find words unless something goes wrong and I am unhappy."

OK, so maybe this was a little self-indulgent, but it helped me to drag out feelings and experiences and things I've learned into the light of day. I ended up with a sense that the richness of the mind is so great that words cannot express it. Words are labels that help us to summarize, classify and retrieve our stored memories and experiences. But using words to tell about experience is like accessing the Internet with a 14.4K modem. And yet we have to, because words are our primary interface with the world. And the more words we use, the more we get stuck in the words and we can't turn them off.

We can't escape words. I can't escape them. I've used a whole lot of words to write about getting behind the words. See what I mean? ☐

Mystery and Mastery

Steve Broe

The victories of life go to the courageous. This is part of the American ethos. Whether a person is a sales professional, a manufacturer, a sports hero, or even an artist with a bold idea, it is the American way to praise the courageous.

The Japanese too have idealized the role of the warrior. There are some important differences between the heroic American GI and the Japanese samurai - one is a rugged individualist, the other a loyal minion of his daimyo. And the samurai has also had a close link with spirituality and the arts. Many retired samurai found second careers as monks or

artists; the American war hero typically goes into politics or business.

I've never had military experience in this country - I have trained for twenty years in a system that directly descends from the traditional Japanese samurai system. While the art I practiced is a modern one - aikido dates from the twentieth century - it is part of a larger system of martial training and philosophy called budo. Budo roughly means, "the way of the warrior."

I've found that the path of Budo can yield mastery - as well as mystery. This I can tell you with some sincerity - the founder of aikido was not just a master - Morihei Ueshiba was a living dragon. And that was enough mystery to keep me going at least twenty years.

I started training in aikido back when I was twenty-three years old, and continued for exactly twenty years. While I received many valuable lessons in grace, balance, and the art of unarmed and armed combat; I gained a few philosophical lessons that might apply to my life and others. Aikido is not just about successfully dealing with fighting; it is also about learning to deal with conflict at an extremely deep level. For the whole body and mind to be united at the point of conflict is an advantage - and aikido taught me these lessons at a profoundly physical level.

Here are some lessons from aikido that I apply to my life and career. Perhaps you will find them of value too.

Focus and Patience are the basis for learning any new skill that is worthwhile. In fact, focus and patience will bring better results than strength and speed. Imagine two samurai facing each other in the field of combat. Facing each other in perfect balance, neither blinks nor moves a muscle, knowing that the first one to make a false move will be the loser. Focus and patience are the foundation for lasting success. The only time I can really advance in my clarinet study is when I use these two virtues.

Always a Beginner - no matter how hard you study, the beginner's mind is necessary in order for the student to advance. True masters understand this, and respect the beginner as a worthy position. Teachers and students have a divine relationship.

The strange paradox is that after a while, even the student begins to wear the robe of the teacher. All teachers have been students; and true masters are still beginners.

Regular Training brings results - When I was a student of aikido, the message passed between students - if you only train three times a week, you'll never advance, you'll just maintain your skill. You need to practice four or five times a week to advance your art. Only training twice a week? You'll probably fall behind. This I know for sure: good results depend on the cost of repetitive practice.

Mastery is elusive - Never call yourself a master, for others will truly know that . . . you lie. On the other hand, others may think that you are a master, and it may be true for them. You must deny sincerely if you are ever called a master, for it won't be true. The most you can hope to be is a mentor or teacher.

My days of training in budo are over. I applied myself sincerely for many years; and I can truly tell you that I ended my career as a martial artist as a beginner. I never won any awards, and I never mastered the koshinage throw. But the path was worthy and I have learned lessons of life that remain to serve me well.

I never learned the deep mysteries of aikido; but the more I studied, the more I became convinced that they exist. And I know exactly where to discover the mysteries: they reside in the fundamental lessons of the art. Ueshiba taught that it may have been necessary only to learn one technique (ikkyo) to master aikido. After twenty years I thought I knew the technique, but alas, there was always more.

Mystery and the elusive search for Mastery - these are two ingredients for a life worth living. □

© Steve Broe, 2001. Printed with permission. Steve began practicing aikido in 1980 in Southern California under Sensei Tourda. He studied under several teachers, and served as President of Orange County Aiki Kai and Vice President of Arizona Aikido. He now lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Promotions since July 2001

ADULTS

Sandan

Derek Nakagawa (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Nidan

Andrew Sawley (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Matt Brown (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Shodan

Bob Paul (Kenshinkan)

Jim Moline (Kenshinkan)

Roger Mosconi (Aiki Institute of Spokane)

Rowland Tegao (Aikido Academy)

Steve Wasserman (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Young-In Park (Orange County Aiki Kai)

1st Kyu

Allah Ali Baba (Aiki Institute of Spokane)

Ron Mc Devitt (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Steve Holley (Orange County Aiki Kai)

3rd Kyu

Al Alejandro (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Marjorie Bagley (Jyushinkan)

Nicha Panich (Chushinkan)

Randy Yamamoto (Chushinkan)

4th Kyu

Carol Barker (Jyushinkan)

Mike Suwa (Orange County Aiki Kai)

5th Kyu

Andrew Lee (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Cesar Barbosa (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Fabiola Nunez (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Graham Gilles (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Jeremy Neff (Jyushinkan)

Josef Cura (Chushinkan)

Keith Anderson (Jyushinkan)

Lucas Anderson (Jyushinkan)

Michael Sanders (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Randy Paulson (Aikido of Rossmoor)

6th Kyu

Craig Stephen (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Damien Sritapan (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Dennis De Vore (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Frank Olson (Jyushinkan)

Julie Smith-Medina (Aikido of Rossmoor)

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Romy de los Reyes (Chushinkan)

Sandra Roberts (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Stephanie Burgos (Chushinkan)

7th Kyu

Antoinette Chandler (Aikido of Rossmoor)

Damien Sritapan (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Dean Wells (Aiki Institute of Spokane)

Gary Newbold (Orange County Aiki Kai)

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Nicole Portman (Chushinkan)

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Todd Wardell (Aiki Institute of Spokane)

Wais Ali (Chushinkan)

JUNIORS

2.5 Kyu

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Travis Lee (Orange County Aiki Kai)

5.5 Kyu

Dean Matsuda (Orange County Aiki Kai)

Julia Westermeier (Orange County Aiki Kai)

6.5 Kyu

Daniel Nguyen (Orange County Aiki Kai)

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