



Aikido of Phoenix

Teaching Aikido as a Complete Budo

Satori Dojo Newsletter

April 2006

www.AikidoOfPhoenix.Com

Sensei's Corner

Konichiwa Deshi!

I had the opportunity to take part in a Bujinkan To-shin Do seminar recently. For those of you who are wondering what the heck the Bujinkan or To-Shin Do is, it is simply Ninjitsu. Over the past 100+ years, serious practitioners of the art felt it best to steer away from the

忍者

term Ninjitsu because of stereotypes. While it is true that there are many people who study Ninjitsu in the form it is portrayed as on TV and in movies, serious practitioners are a different breed. They take their training very seriously and are as much a Budoka as our Aikidoka.

Potocki Sempai and Jim Clark joined me at the seminar and we were welcomed with a friendly smile and sincere warmth. I often comment that we get warmer welcomes at other arts' dojos than we do at Aikido dojos (not always, but generally). The session I attended was based on sword and koryu, or old school, techniques. It was fantastic!

The point of this is not simply to say gee I had a great time, but rather to reflect on how much we have in common with people that follow a true warrior path. While there may have been some differences in

formality and technique, the warrior spirit was the same. It takes a conscious choice to follow this path and it is a choice you should not make lightly. The path of a warrior is humble and simple. The most descriptive way to describe this lifestyle is to say "A Warrior lives his or her life as they know it should be lived....Not because they have to, but because they simply do". It can be a difficult life to follow considering attitudes of modern society. Pressure is great to be mediocre. It takes courage to stand above the crowd and be a warrior.

The warrior mind is not simply set on the studies of technique and defense. It is an expansive mind that is as concerned with the welfare of a neighbor's small child as it is the sharpness of his blade. Those who choose this path are a minority in a world obsessed with material possessions and visceral satisfaction.

I hope you take time in your daily lives to ask yourself what type of life are you leading. Are you the person you want to be? Self-reflection is the sharpest sword a warrior has. If you are not pleased, then change, Yes, just change. Decide this instant that you will be better and commit to that with your heart. With this you will never go back. I wish you all the best in your journey.

-In Oneness
Sensei

The warrior mind is not simply set on the studies of technique and defense.

The Kids' Corner

Aikido has a lot of self-defense applications. It's one of the main reasons people start training. But I want to encourage you to think of other ways you can use Aikido.

In many of my classes this past month we practiced a variety of self-defense techniques. None, of which we see on a regular basis in a traditional Aikido class, but all based on Aikido principles. Aikido is all about blending with energy and extending ki and using those main ideas many techniques were created. However you are not locked into doing just those techniques that you have been formally taught. That's what I like to expose kids' to when we focus on

self-defense tactics—remember the principles. It's not about getting a good kotegaeshi or sankyo. It's about moving your whole body and extending all your energy to escape, disarm or control the person trying to hurt you. In the end you do what you need to do to survive. Your Aikido training is invaluable in this sense as many of you are becoming aware the longer you train. Moving in a circular fashion, lowering your center and blending with oncoming energy becomes second nature when you do it long enough. The techniques are just tools to help you achieve these fundamental principles.

The best example of this is when we do self-defense tactics or when we do randori in class. Ran-

dori is when you have multiple attackers coming at you at the same time. You don't have much time to react or decide what technique you're going to do. You just have to get out of the way, take the person down so you can deal with the next attacker quickly. That is always our goal—a natural, circular movement of least resistance. We escape and no major harm is done to the attacker.

Randori can take many shapes too. Sensei often times refers to traffic as one big randori and I agree. There are so many moving parts when one is driving. You must pay attention to everything. But sometimes randori can be having tons of homework or being on the basketball court. Randori can also include verbal attacks. When someone is being teased, made fun of or being picked on they are experiencing their own personal randori. Maybe you've experienced your own randori

before. It was probably pretty hard to neutralize it without escalating it into something more. But, that's why you train. We practice the physical movements of techniques as well as the mental discipline of self-control. The longer you train the more effective you become at controlling yourself and therefore your situations.

I wish you luck in all your personal randoris and remember to talk to your parents or other trusted friends to help you figure things out. If you ever have a specific self-defense scenario or question please don't hesitate to ask me. I'll do my best to provide some help. I would also love to hear about any personal randori you have endured by using Aikido principles.

Teresa Mastison Sensei



The longer you train the more effective you become at controlling yourself and therefore your situations.

Student Comments

Reading Sensei's Corner in last month's newsletter I was reminded a very similar conversation that I had with my first Sensei, about twelve years ago. Since then I've put more thought into what he told me back then and have discussed it with a number of people, and I felt it was something worth sharing with all of you.

Most people, if they train long enough, will experience what they perceive as a sort of roadblock or plateau in their training – a period of weeks, months, or even longer, when you feel like no matter how hard you train you're not getting better in your art, when even the most basic techniques puzzle you again, and it seems like you just can't get anything right.

Both your body and your mind are involved in your training. Your mind learns a technique by watching – you watch Sensei demonstrate and try to make your body emulate what you see. Your body, on the other hand, learns by doing – every time you do a technique, your body learns it a little better, and it's that muscle-memory more than intellect that allows you to do the technique better over time.

Most of the time your mind and body are more or less in sync, and will progress at the same pace, but there may be

times when your mind will outpace your body, and that can create this kind of artificial roadblock. I say artificial, because although it may *feel* like it, your technique is not getting worse, or even staying the same – it's more that you've progressed to a point where even if you don't realize it, you've actually broken through an intellectual barrier and are seeing new aspects of a technique that you weren't able to see before, and the struggling that you feel is your body struggling to catch up with that. It's in these times of difficulty that it's most important that you continue to train, and you should make an effort to focus even more than usual.

Even the most basic technique requires years of training to perform well, and "mastery", if there is such a thing, will take a lifetime of study. Every time I watch Sensei demonstrate a technique, I look for something that I'm not doing quite right, and when I find it, I take it not as a bad sign, but rather as a good sign. If I were to ever have a day when I thought to myself "Wow, that was a perfect Nikyo.", *that* would be a bad sign, because as long as you continue to train, the only thing that can keep you from learning more is if you make the mistake of thinking that you've learned all there is to learn. For the Budoka, the real goal is to continue to train and continue to learn, and never to reach an end to either.

-Niko Huffman

Promotions & Test Candidates

Promoted:

Hachikyu—Justin Shagena, Rachel Pearlstein, Ariana Clavell, Diego Chaviarria, Jacquelyn Chaviarria, Alexander Huang, Zachary Huanh, Annika McGinley, Christopher McGinley, Kalyssa Harris, Kirielle Singarajah, Eva Nys, Dillon Nys, Lisa Besnier, Christian Thompson

Shichikyu—Jessica Lister, Brooke Lister, Thomas Skalsky, Zarin Tuten, Joseph Valencia, Tristan Britt, Tracy Forth, Austin Kim, Alexandra Fornek, Ameenah Graham, Alex Shearer

1st Stepping Stone—Aimee Flores, Raquel Dumas, Wil Brown

2nd Stepping Stone—Skyler Hugo, Zachary Hugo

Rokkyu—John Barkley, Nicole Dentz

Gokyu—Kevin Boesel, Joseph Luongo

Invited to Test:

Hachikyu—Runa Nakamura, Jack Littler, Faith Rallison, James Rallison

Shichikyu—Isaiah Nixon, Quinn Zapata, Jack Rynd, Katrina Khoo, Kori St. Marie, Madeleine Rueter, Elliott Clark

1st Stepping Stone—Fernando Torres, Olivia Talarico, Julia Talarico, Lena Mooney, Salia Levy, Jake Rueter, Kaeloni Graham, Erika Rand, Rachel Boesel, Matthew Boesel

2nd Stepping Stone—Ian Williams, Ben Coody, Nolan Coody, Charis Royal, Guy Sheppard

3rd Stepping Stone—Adam Daley, RJ Ayala, Adam Stringham, Nicholas Luongo

Upcoming Events

Practical Aikido Seminar

April 26-28 Fort Hays State University, Hays , Kansas

Mastison Sensei will be teaching a special seminar on practical applications of Aikido. This seminar is being hosted by the Fort Hays State University Aikido Club. All students are welcome to attend.

See Sensei or contact Rich Lisichenko for more information: 785-625-9736

Defensive Tactics Instructor Certification Course

July 13-15 St. Louis, Missouri

Mastison Sensei will be conducting a three day defensive tactics instructor certification course. The course is open to all sworn and non-sworn officers. It is additionally open to serious martial arts students preparing to teach in the DT field. Visit: <http://www.aikidoofphoenix.com/dtcertification.htm> for more information or see Sensei.

Dojo Notes

- There will be no class on May 3rd at the Main Dojo in Chandler.
- No class in Glendale on May 26th & 27th—Memorial day weekend.
- We are now asking that all students wear some sort of sandal type shoe around the dojo area. When you are ready to get on the mat, simply walk up to the edge of the mat, slip off your shoes and get on to train. This will help us keep the mats cleaner.
- As summer quickly approaches, we would like to remind everyone to make sure you take time to wash

your gi. A second gi is a good way to avoid moving into your laundry room:)

- Parents—a reminder to bring any pens or paper your child may need for activities with them to the dojo. Using newsletters and other items off the dojo table for personal activities and scrap paper needs to end.



Aikidoka Out and About

To Shin Do seminar in Chandler

L to R: Jim Clark, Helen Russo, Mark Russo Sensei, Lori Stinson, Michael Stinson & Gene Potocki Sempai

