



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO & TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial



Spring appears finally to have arrived; this is always a special and enlivening time of year...we look forward to sunshine, warm weather, and perhaps the opportunity to train outside!

March was another active month; it also presented us with some challenges. Early this month, the school was broken into; the Judo Club had some cash stolen, our Aiki Shrine was damaged, and we lost some wooden weapons. Gratefully, we have lost nothing of real value; our wonderful community remains vibrant and intact, lost weapons can be replaced, and the damage to the cabinet can be viewed as an opportunity to create a better Aiki Shrine.

Sensei Brad has also announced a change in our fee structure; he has done so reluctantly, in keeping with his wish that our community should remain accessible to all. However, after twelve years the realities of life have forced this "right pricing"; this will ensure that our School continues to operate and grow, and that we will offer, into the future, the unparalleled value of our training experience, and the privilege of being a part of our special community. So, when you consider the new fee structure, please take a moment to remember the value we each take from the hours we spend here.

Stuart

This newsletter contains a number of submissions from members; I have edited these to fit this format, and have tried to remain true to the intent of the writers. I thank the contributors for adding their voices and sharing their perspectives, and beg their indulgence if I have in any way altered their meaning.

April 2010

Corporal Francisco Gomez Memorial Library

The Corporal Francisco Gomez Memorial Library went live as scheduled on Sunday, February 7th; thanks to our two volunteer librarians, Ineke C. and Reg N. We will still welcome all donations, such as cash, books, DVD's, and magazines. The best news is that our Library is being used, by our members; please continue to support, and to enjoy, this wonderful and special resource.



Promotions



We congratulate those of us who were promoted in January of 2010:

Kids

- Paige O. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Jorden P. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Jake M. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Jasper W. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Tristan A. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Hanna S. Jr. 13th Kyu

Adults

- Reg N. 7th Kyu
- Reg N. 6th Kyu
- Tim O. 7th Kyu
- Tim O. 6th Kyu

Special mention and congratulations to Reg and Tim; they achieved two ranks in one month, a first for our School! They credit their hard work together, both in regular classes and additional morning sessions, for this significant milestone.

Congratulations!

Range Training Day

Shawn C. has organized an afternoon of pistol training; this will begin at NOON on Sunday, April 3rd, at the Spruce Grove Gun Club. Weapons and ammunition will be provided, and there will be well qualified range officers to teach and supervise. Check at the Dojo for further information.

Spring Course Calendar

Five Element Chi Gong. Chi Gong means working with your life energy; the 5 Element set is an ancient routine that includes holding postures with gentle movement. It restores balance between the five major organs in the body and is an ideal way to establish relaxation and mental clarity while cultivating chi or life force.

Sunday, 18 Apr 10, 2:00 to 5:00 PM, \$75

Meditation Made Easy. Discover the benefits of meditation practice, and how easy it is to learn at this afternoon session. Meditation is ideal for opening a "gate" to your inner self, and will help to develop a base for relaxation and stress reduction.

Sunday, 16 May 10, 2:00 to 5:00 PM, \$75

All of the above courses are open to anyone; students of both aikido and tai chi are encouraged to attend, and if you know anyone who might have an interest, these courses are an excellent introduction!

Find the Tiger Within

Now available; "Finding the Tiger Within!", a CD on personal safety and protection. This CD is filled with strategies and principles on the mental and preventive aspects of self defense, as well as physical techniques when confronted. This is a no-nonsense presentation, and contains information that everyone can benefit from: the "life skill" of personal protection. These are available from Sensei Brad, for only \$20.00, so get your copy today!



Announcements

Aikido Summer Camp will be held from 25 July to 1 August in Glenwood Springs Colorado. Five of us have registered, but at this point the seminar is full...so our names are on a waiting list! The good news is that we have been told we will very likely be able to attend...this will be a unique aikido experience, one that we all look forward to!

Saotome Sensei has announced the dates of his next Seminar at Aikido of Missoula; it is scheduled for the weekend of 24 to 26 September 2010. This is always a special trip for our aikido students, so make plans to travel with us and experience the amazing talent of our Most Senior Shihan!

Aikido Special Training will be held on Friday, 16 April, 6:30 to 9:30 PM. We will continue with the theme of Randori, dealing with multiple attackers, with a special focus on the principles, strategies, and movement necessary to deal with these situations.

Dedication Ceremony: We still intend to hold a dedication ceremony to formally launch our Library and Aiki Shrine; this will be scheduled as soon as possible, and after the repair and upgrades are complete. Members will be notified in advance!

Finally, remember to always keep an eye on www.abundantpeace.com for an up to date list of seminars, courses, and events. Check back often to see "what's new"; this month: check the T'ai Chi videos!

Cover the Centre!

My daughter Paige has attended our kids' classes for about one year. A few days ago we were wrestling; she had a stuffed animal in her hand that she would swing, trying to hit my head. Each time she swung, I would raise my hands and cover my centre. I bragged that she would never get me, because I was covering my centre, just as we learn in aikido; I watched each time, as she drew her right hand back, and raised my hands each time she struck.

After each swing I would taunt her a little, with a laugh to remind her of the importance of covering your centre. Again she drew her right hand back, getting ready to strike; however, this time her left hand came from nowhere, striking me squarely in the nose...a strike I had not seen or anticipated! Mother and daughter laughed, as tears came to my eyes.

Covering the centre is important, as I thought I was teaching Paige; instead, Paige taught me another important lesson, which is to not focus on the weapon!

-Tim O-

Great news; early morning aikido keiko continues on Mondays and Thursdays, from 6:00 to 7:30 AM. Mat fee is \$10.00; join us if you can!

Awareness & Intent

I recently read an article in the Edmonton Journal, about a twenty something journalist who was "swarmed" by a group of teens. As I finished the article, I noticed that I was feeling agitated, and that I could actually feel the adrenalin start to course through my system.

The attack started when a single teen separated himself from the group to approach the journalist. He came in smoothly and quickly, overly friendly, shaking the journalist's right hand and giving him a half-hug with the left arm...not too bad, so far, right?

Wrong! This hoodlum then proceeded to escort the journalist back to the rest of the group, about fifteen feet away, his left hand aggressively guiding the way.

Immediately, the writer was threateningly bullied by the entire group, males and females alike. At one point, a girl actually took his glasses right off his face...leaving him severely disadvantaged as he had very poor sight. He ended up losing a few effects, his carrying case, and he came away shaken, but unharmed.

I realized that my adrenaline was caused by my anger. I was angry at the mob of youths, angry at the journalist, angry that it wasn't me, and angry that this event happened in our City.

We talk about awareness in many different ways, both inside and outside of the dojo, but I believe that we have to pay more attention to this subtle word and what it means to us. First, could the journalist have spotted the danger and avoided the assault? If he couldn't avoid it, could he have ended the interaction through his own words or actions, before it went any further? My guess is that he was not really aware or conscious of the danger until he was being led away, at which point he seems to have given up and submitted to this attack.

It is extremely important to be aware of your surroundings at all times. In malls, in restaurants, on the street, in the Dojo... be aware. This is not paranoia; simply be alert and aware, always.

You can practice this in the Dojo by being aware of the intent of your partner or partners, and by being aware of your own intent. Too often as nage, we hesitate or pull back at the last second, either because we have failed to initiate our intended technique, or because we have been met by an uke that does not move as expected. We utter "sorry, I wasn't ready", and look to start again; not finishing the intended technique is acceptable, but we must still have intent. For example, "I will not stand still and be grabbed or struck", or "I will defect and move away from any attack".

We have also encountered mid-technique stoppages where nage literally gives up. They may have begun with intent, perhaps

too focused like "I will do Kote Gaeshi"! When that does not happen, they just quit.

Giving up on a chosen technique may be inevitable, the right thing to do, so long as you haven't given up on maintaining your space and finishing the interaction in some way. Start by becoming more aware of your intent and modifying it to fit the situation, "I will take uke's centre". By doing this, the connection and not the technique will guide you through the encounter.

As uke, you have the benefit of potentially not knowing what is going to happen. In fact, it is better not to think of this at all. Be aware of your intent and focus on "staying connected to nage's centre".

Could better awareness have saved our reporter? Absolutely! I failed to mention that he had noticed the group, deliberately looked away when he saw them to avoid all eye contact. By doing this, he showed that he already knew they were trouble; and, he took his attention away from this threat. As soon as he noticed them, and because he clearly felt them to be a threat, he should have changed directions to determine their intent. He could then have chosen to run, or to prepare himself to speak to the group from a position of strength. Either way, he would have been much better prepared to deal with whatever came next.

-Ron M-

Easter morning keiko Mon 5 Apr 10, 0800 to 0930, breakfast afterward; the mat fee is our usual \$10.00!

Chi Gong Retreat

The 2010 Retreat began with food, a lovely breakfast; it was a chance to gather and meet. The retreat was a place of reverence and silence; for me it was a welcoming embrace of calm and, as my mind settled, it gave me a wonderful sensation of peace.

We learned about the energy of Chi, a force unseen but there inside; waiting to be used wisely or left aside and used wastefully by our busy emotions and haphazard actions. "The mind leads the Chi"; clear the mind with breath work; build the Chi with your intentions; it is a simple routine; it takes practice. I was so tired after the work of the retreat that I skipped my usual T'ai Chi set and slept well after so much effort.

The next morning, I began my T'ai Chi set as usual; breath into the dan tien, then the Chi Gong bow. It felt great; I felt the openness of my body. It began in commencement, a feeling of energy from my feet through to my hands, or was it electricity? It was a very powerful feeling! I slowed the set, to continue this sensation, and tried to clear my mind so that I would not block the flow of energy. As my set finally ended I stood, savoring this feeling as long as I could.

I believed before, but now I know for certain; I have experienced a touch of Chi. "The Mind Leads the Chi"; it just takes practice!

-Roberta F-