



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO AND TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial

February 2009

The Ten Essentials



In the days that have passed since my return from Florida, and the Winter Intensive Aikido Seminar, I have had some time to reflect more deeply on that experience.

Aside from temperatures in the high seventies to low eighties, and the sunshine, what I most enjoyed was training with and learning from such a wide range of aikido "styles" and experience.

The theme of the Winter Intensive was the martial aspect of aikido training. In the four to six ninety minute sessions each day, we worked on an immense range of technique, with a strong overlay of training and practice of our core principles. Empty hand, bokken, shinai, and jo were all practiced.

On the subject of the "style" of aikido, Saotome Sensei was emphatic; as taught by O-Sensei, aikido has no style. It evolves, and because it is an internal art, that style will vary slightly with each person, with each set of circumstances, with each attack. This was for me a powerful and liberating message; at the most basic level it meant that I was free to explore each technique by understanding the principles behind it, rather than whether or not I was "doing it right".

I was also fortunate to work once or twice with George Ledyard Sensei; his message was the same as it was last year's, that we learn by imitating; he therefore encouraged us to "act as though we knew what we were doing, until time and practice would remove the need to act".

That message was also powerful; we were to throw ourselves into our keiko with passion and enthusiasm, free from fear of error or embarrassment. Aikido is also a very unique martial art because it becomes more about "effective" or "ineffective", "works" or "does not work", rather than "right" or "wrong".

Aikido and Tai Chi have many similarities, more than there are differences. These few lessons, therefore, apply just as powerfully to Tai Chi as they do to Aikido. I would therefore encourage every student at our school to keep these ideas in mind when on the mats.

Free yourself from fear of embarrassment and error, and throw yourself into practice with passion and enthusiasm; forget about making your technique "right", and focus on making it effective. This will take you on a path that will align your study with the core principles of your art; and, after all, that is the ultimate goal of the internal arts.

Stuart Krause

Upcoming Workshops

Abundant Peace Aikido and Tai Chi offers a series of workshops each year, along with the regular practice of the two core arts. Coming up in the first part of 2009 are a number of these:



5 Element Chi Gong, Sunday, February 8th, from 2 to 5 PM. Chi Gong means working

with your life energy; this session is open to anyone, regardless of their level of skill.

Emergency Self Defense Course, on two Sundays, March 8th and 15th, from 2 to 5 PM. This offers a practical approach to self defense, using basic techniques that do not require strength or special skills.

Sun Style Tai Chi Mini-Set; two Sundays, April 19th and 26th from 2 to 5 PM. This gentle set is composed of 12 moves from the Sun Style of tai chi; it is appropriate for both beginners and advanced students.

8 Pieces of Brocade Chi Gong; Sunday, May 31st, from 2 to 5 PM. This is an ancient form of Chi Gong, composed of eight gentle movements, and is appropriate for anyone, no matter their level of skill or knowledge.

The fifth of the "Ten Essentials" of Tai Chi practice, as taught by Yang Cheng Fu, is "Sink the Shoulders and Droop the Elbows".



This principle was expressed as

"Sinking the shoulders means the shoulders relax open and hang downward. If you can't relax them downward, the shoulders pop up and then the chi follows and goes upward, causing the whole body to lack strength. Drooping the elbows means the elbows are relaxed downward. If the elbows are elevated then the shoulders are unable to sink. When you use this to push someone they won't go far. It's like the 'cut off' energy of external martial arts."

Reprinted from www.yangfamilytaichi.com

Next month: "Use Intent Rather than Force".

Ikeda Sensei Seminar

Our next seminar opportunity will once again be at Aikido of Missoula, under the tutelage of Hiroshi Ikeda Shihan. Ikeda Shihan currently holds the rank of 7th Dan, from Mitsugi Saotome Shihan and the Aikido World Federation (Honbu Dojo); he is the Chief Instructor of Boulder Aikikai, a non-profit school of Aikido in Boulder Colorado, and also manages the operations of Bu Jin Design, a Martial Arts Supply Company.



The dates have changed! Unlike those we previously published, the date of this seminar will be 20th through 22nd March 2009; seminar details are as follows:

Friday, 20 March 2009

6:00 to 6:45 PM, Registration
7:00 to 8:30 PM, Keiko

Saturday, 21 March 2009

10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Keiko
2:30 PM to 4:30 PM, Keiko
7:30 PM to ???, Potluck & Party

Sunday, 22 March 2009

10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Keiko
2:30 PM to 4:30 PM, Keiko

Those of you that have attended these Seminars in the past will know not only how valuable they are to your training, but how much fun we have; I encourage all of you to make plans to attend!



Announcements

Aikido of Missoula has announced that Saotome Sensei is planning to conduct his annual seminar on the weekend of 25 to 27 September, 2009.

Congratulations to the Tai Chi Beginner Class for reaching the second "cross hands" in the set, and then for working through the full set so quickly; well done!

The next Beginner Class for Tai Chi begins on Saturday, 7th February, 2009.

Aikido Movie Night will be held on the evening of Saturday, February 7th.

Finally, remember to keep an eye on our web site, www.abundantpeace.com for a detailed listing of workshops and seminars.

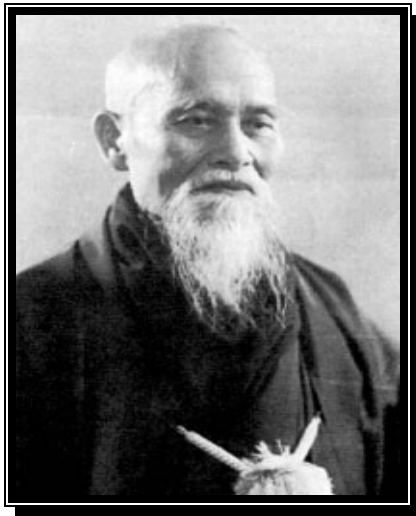
Gasshuku

Aikido Special Training for February will be "Gasshuku" which means "living together". This full day seminar, focusing on the martial nature of aikido, will be held on Saturday, February 21st as follows:

12:30 PM to 4:00 PM: Keiko

4:00 PM to 6:00 PM: Dinner (together!)

6:00 PM to 10:00 PM: Keiko



Quote from O Sensei

"The techniques of Aikido change constantly; every encounter is unique, and the appropriate response should emerge naturally. Today's techniques will be different tomorrow. Do not get caught up with the form and appearance of a challenge. Aikido has no form - it is the study of the spirit."

-Morihei Ueshiba-

ASU Winter Intensive

At the New Year's Eve social, I learned that the "Winter Intensive Seminar" held by ASU has a history of roughly thirty years; over that period, the event has evolved from very humble beginnings, to the premier Aikido event that it is today.

John Messores, Rokkudan, is the Sensei and Chief Instructor of St. Petersburg Aikikai, and Jihonjuku, the Academy of Warrior Spirit; he is also the supervising Sensei for ASU in the Tampa area. In the early years following the arrival of



Saotome Sensei to North America, Messores Sensei and many others studied with him on a nearly full-time basis; one of the "study sessions" that grew out of that was a "winter camp" between Christmas and New Year's Day. Messores Sensei

related to me that, in those early days, none of the students really had any money; so, many of them would live in his house, or camp in his back yard, and much of the keiko would be done at a local park.

In the decades that have passed since, the event was moved several times, but always kept the same dates; finally, for the past three years it has been held at this fabulous resort on the beach in St. Petersburg, with normally one hundred or so in attendance. They assure me there will be a fourth year, at which I am going to be; this has proven to be, for me, the ideal Christmas vacation!

Club Special

During the months of January and February, Tai Chi students can try Aikido, and Aikido students can try Tai Chi, free for one month! This is to give those who are already a student at Abundant Peace School a chance to explore the similarities and differences of the other Art. Both Tai Chi and Aikido are Internal or Soft-Style Martial Arts, and they are based on similar principles, even though their expression appears quite different. So, if you have had any interest or curiosity at all about the 'other' Art at our Club, now is the time to "expand your horizons"! Remember, the classes for both arts are conveniently held back-to-back 3 times a week.

Promotions & Advancement

We congratulate those members of our Club listed below, on their promotions:



KIDS

Jacob C
14th Kyu

Aikido Movie Night

We will hold our first ever "Aikido Movie Night" on the evening of Saturday, February 7th. Marcel has graciously volunteered his home for this event; maps and directions to his place can be obtained at the dojo.

Movie night will begin at 6:00 PM; we will be entertained and enlightened by a variety of aikido film clips; and, we will partake in a potluck supper together.

If you are unsure of what to bring, speak to Marcel for suggestions; he can be reached on the mats, or at 780-418-8385.

This is a great chance for our aikido students to get to know each other socially, and to learn more about the aiki path!

Morning classes will continue in 2009, from 6:00- 7:30 AM on Mondays and Thursdays. All ranks are welcome to attend, and the mat fee is only \$10.00!