



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO AND TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial

March 2009



Over the past month or so, I have begun to explore and reflect on my personal aikido journey, and the challenges this journey offers. Most readers know that I studied aikido a number of years ago; it was at that first meeting with the aiki path that I learned how truly frustrating it could be... something I am reminded of, lately.

Having been forced to give up those studies many years ago, and finally having found

my way back, I am now very committed to the study of aikido; at the same time, I am perhaps trying to "make up for lost time" and am on the mats as often as I can be. Because of this effort, I have always felt that I should be able to "progress" very quickly; I have learned that this is not true, at least not all of the time.

First, we need to understand that, in aikido, true progression has little to do with technique; the study of internal energy is our true path. The practice of technique is therefore just a vehicle for that exploration; to learn aikido we must surrender that focus, and move past the purely physical.

When I attended the winter intensive for the first time, I was caught up in technical study; this year, I was able to move past that and touched, at least occasionally, true aiki; since returning home, I have been very frustrated by the fact that I have not managed to re-establish that connection.

Along with being frustrating, one can begin to wonder if they are going to be able to move ahead; we need to view these "walls" or "plateaus" as an opportunity, rather than a hindrance. The true enemy, in all martial study, lies within ourselves; when we "hit the wall", so to speak, we must not permit frustration or other "negative energies" to divert us from the path!

We will all encounter these barriers; the real joy in the study of aikido is that it cannot be mastered in a year or two, that this journey

is endless, and earning your hakama means you are now a beginner! Our opportunity, then, is to meet that sense of frustration with joyfulness, and to spiritually renew our commitment to the aiki path; to train is to progress...whether we are aware of that progression or not!

Stuart Krause

The Ten Essentials

The sixth of the "Ten Essentials" of Tai Chi practice, as taught by Yang Cheng Fu, is "Use Intent Rather than Force".



This principle was expressed as

"The taiji classics say, 'this is completely a matter of using intent rather than force'. When you practice taijiquan, let the entire body relax and extend. Don't employ even the tiniest amount of coarse strength which would cause muscular-skeletal or circulatory blockage with the result that you restrain or inhibit yourself. Only then will you be able to lightly and nimbly change and

transform, circling naturally. Some wonder: if I don't use force, how can I generate force? The net of acupuncture meridians and channels throughout the body are like the waterways on top of the earth. If the waterways are not blocked, the water circulates; if the meridians are not impeded the chi circulates. If you move the body about with stiff force, you swamp the meridians, chi and blood are impeded, movements are not nimble; all someone has to do is begin to guide you and your whole body is moved. If you use intent rather than force, wherever the intent goes, so goes the chi. In this way - because the chi and blood are flowing, circulating every day throughout the entire body, never stagnating - after a lot of practice, you will get true internal strength. That's what the taiji classics mean by "only by being extremely soft are you able to achieve extreme hardness." somebody who is really adept at taiji has arms which seem like silk wrapped around iron, immensely heavy. Someone who practices external martial arts, when he is using his force, seems very strong. But when not using force, he is very light and floating. By this we can see that his force is actually external or superficial strength. The force used by external martial artists is especially easy to lead or deflect; hence it is not of much value."

Reprinted from
www.yangfamilytaichi.com

Next month: "Synchronize Upper and Lower Body".

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 seminar details are:



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 will conduct his annual seminar from 25 to 27 September, 2009.

We congratulate the "fall 2008" Tai Chi Class on successfully completing the four month beginner program, and welcome most of the graduates of that program to the advance class.

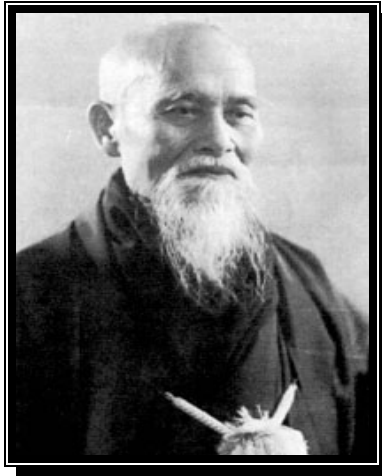
We were excited in February to welcome a new Beginner Tai Chi class; this enthusiastic group is already well on their way to the first "cross hands" and the delicious "noodle night" that goes with it!

Aikido special training is on Tuesday, 17th March from 6:30 to 9:30 PM; the theme is: "Ikkyo: root and foundation of all technique".

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

Gasshuku

Nine brave souls attended the winter Gasshuku, on Saturday, February 21st; this intense full day of training challenged our spirits, minds and bodies. The focus was on the martial core and nature of aikido, which led to real intensity in training. This was an excellent training experience, and we encourage everyone to attend these special events as circumstances allow!



Quote from O Sensei

"In your training do not be in a hurry, for it takes a minimum of ten years to master the basics and advance to the first rung. Never think of yourself as an all-knowing, perfected master; you must continue to train daily with your friends and students and progress together in Aikido."

-Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei-

Dojo Etiquette

It is an ancient and honored tradition that all members of a traditional Arts School must actively support the learning environment by helping to care for and maintain the learning environment. This is expressed in many forms, from the simple to the elaborate; in our School, one expression of this is found in the act of sweeping the mats, before and after practice.

Students should view this as an opportunity for personal growth; sweeping should be approached in a meditative manner. Before class, view it as an opportunity to clear your mind and prepare your spirit; after class, it is a chance to reflect upon what you have learned. Symbolically, the act of sweeping is a form of misogi, or purification; it should therefore never be seen as demeaning, but rather, should be viewed as a privilege. All students should feel free to participate in this helpful ritual, without being asked!

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!

Club Special

The club special offered in January and February was so successful that we have decided to continue it; until further notice, 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 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, classes for both are held back-to-back 3 times a week.

Promotions & Advancement

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



KIDS

14th Kyu

Airk M.
Ethan T.
J.D. G.
Nikola K.
Devon D.

Earth Hour 2009

What began as a campaign to get Sydneysiders to turn their lights off, has grown to become one of the world's biggest climate change initiatives. In 2009, at 8.30pm on March 28, people around the world will turn their lights off for one hour – Earth Hour. We're aiming to reach one billion people, more than 1000 cities, all joining together in a global effort to show that it is possible to take action on global warming. Earth Hour started in 2007 in Sydney, Australia with 2.2 million homes and businesses turning their lights off for one hour. Global landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Rome's Coliseum and the Coca Cola billboard in Times Square, all stood in darkness, as symbols of hope for a cause that grows more urgent by the hour.

Earth Hour 2009 is a global call to action to every individual, every business and every community; to stand up, take responsibility and get involved in working towards a sustainable future. Iconic buildings and landmarks from Europe to The Americas will stand in darkness. People across the world will turn off their lights and join together in creating the vital conversation about the future of our precious planet.

Join us for Earth Hour 2009, turn off your lights at 8.30pm Saturday 28 March and [sign-up here](#) to be counted.