



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO & T'AI CHI

Connections

Editorial

August 2011



Summer seems to be flying past, perhaps simply a byproduct of being stupidly busy? My schedule remains overwhelming, twenty hour work days now the norm... and likely to stay that way for a few more weeks.

September will arrive before we know it. Sensei will soon begin preparation for the fall courses, a time during which the senior members of our aikido and t'ai chi communities will step up and ensure our classes continue undisrupted. This too is one of our traditions; the chance to teach is a welcome learning and growth opportunity, and most of us never truly know the behind the scenes labor that must be expended to ensure our course quality remains the very best.

September means, to some degree at least, the end of our all too brief summer season, a point of some disappointment for many. On the up side, it also means that we can look forward once again to our annual pilgrimage to Missoula, the chance to connect with our Montana friends, and to take in the gifts offered by Saotome Shihan. If the rumors are true, this year may well prove to be our largest contingent yet; if you are "on the fence" in terms of deciding whether or not to make this journey, I encourage you not to miss it. Opportunities in life often present themselves quietly; it is up to us to develop sufficient awareness to understand when the universe presents us with an opportunity that is truly special and unique, and to seize upon that moment with passion and vigor...the opportunity to study with Saotome Shihan is one of those special and unique opportunities, one that seems to be an annual event, but may vanish before our eyes.

So...don't miss out! I have one hotel room remaining in the bunch that I booked, let me know if you want it; remember, this trip is both rewarding, and a "tonne of fun"!

-Stuart-



Promotions

We congratulate those of us who were promoted in July:

Kids

Alex M. 14th Kyu

Adults

Donna P. 9th Kyu
France M. 9th Kyu

I must also make special mention of Patrick F. who received his Yellow Belt promotion in our kids aikido program in the month of June. That was not mentioned in our July Newsletter; that oversight was entirely mine, and I apologize for the error!

Congratulations!

Gasshuku

Special training for the month of August is normally replaced by our "Gasshuku", a full day of aikido training and connection. This will take place on Sunday, 14th August 2011; we will begin at 9:00 AM, and continue until 8:30 PM; yes, we will take the occasional break, and meals will be provided and/or organized, taken together to enhance the feeling of community that Gasshuku is intended to engender. This year, our theme will be "Randori: Dealing with Multiple Attackers". All ranks welcome!

T'ai Chi

Some of you have noticed that I have not been present at the Dojo, certainly not to the extent that I once was. I have written of this, the reasons or excuses for my long absence, and have tried to remain at least a little committed to our community by taking care of these newsletters.

That is all well and good, but without the chance to attend and train, I have missed out on many great experiences, and the absence of what was a major part of my life has been deeply felt by me, on many levels.

One thing that I have been profoundly grateful for is my decision, five years ago, to begin the study of both aikido and t'ai chi. I enjoy them both, and appreciate their commonalities as well as their differences; it is in one of those differences that I have taken some solace these past months.

One of the true beauties of t'ai chi practice is its portability. I don't need a dojo, or mats, or training partners; I simply need some space and my practice can begin. So, although I have been forced by circumstance to abandon my aikido for a time, my chi gong and t'ai chi have been my steady companions, in the sunshine and under the trees of my back yard. A beginner class starts in September; some of you may wish to give it a try!



Announcements

Saotome Sensei has announced the dates of his next Seminar at Aikido of Missoula; it is scheduled for the weekend of 23 to 25 September 2011. Many of us have made this trip before, and I have no doubt we will once again have a large contingent. Make plans to travel with us and experience the amazing talent of our Most Senior Shihan!

Friday, September 23rd 2011

6:00-6:45 pm Registration
7:00-8:30 pm Keiko

Saturday, September 24th 2011

10:00 am-12 noon Keiko
3:00 pm-5:00 pm Keiko
7:30 pm -10:30pm Potluck

Sunday, September 25th 2011

10:00 am-12 noon Keiko
2:30 pm-4:30 pm Keiko

Cost: \$120.00 for all or part of seminar

Morning keiko has been sporadic, and depends upon who is available. If you are interested, speak with Stuart!

The 12th Annual Summer T'ai Chi Retreat was held at the Northern Lights Retreat Centre in St. Albert. This was well attended as always, and the participants left with much to work with to deepen their study of T'ai Chi and its inner principles.

Dojo care has also been sporadically managed, something we must correct. We will communicate to our aikido community by direct email, and organize a time that works.

Sensei will once again be away from the Dojo to prepare for the fall course season, from 19th August to 6th September inclusive. We need our senior students to cover classes, both aikido and t'ai chi, during this period; please communicate your availability for this task to Stuart K.

Training Equipment. Remember that our School can obtain for you the training uniforms and weapons you need. These are delivered to the school at a fair and reasonable price; please communicate your desires to Sensei.



Fifteenth Anniversary

Abundant Peace Aikido and T'ai Chi will celebrate our fifteenth anniversary on the evening of Wednesday, August 10th 2011.

This is a very special benchmark, worth celebrating together. All classes are cancelled in recognition of this special occasion; we will gather at the Dojo for a potluck supper, beginning at 6:30 PM. Once the meal is completed, we will have a fun and energy building Drumming Circle. Peter, one of our T'ai Chi students and a professional drumming facilitator, has agreed to lead us in a stimulating hour of Drumming. Friends, family, all are welcome to join us in this special celebration!

O Sensei's Wisdom



"Life itself is always a trial. In training, you must test and polish yourself in order to face the great challenges of life. Transcend the realm of life and death, and then you will be able to make your way calmly and safely through any crisis that confronts you. Be grateful even for hardship, setbacks, and bad people. Dealing with such obstacles is an essential part of training in Aikido."

The Meaning of Training

Levels of Understanding

In Aikido, one learns by experiencing through the body. This alone would only result into physical experience, even after ten years of practice. If one continues practicing for many years, of course, the body becomes strong. However, the level of understanding can still be doubtful.

Everything is learned physically as a result of experience, but to display what has been learned, some verbal expression and other methods become necessary. Hence, one should find opportunities and try to learn various things outside of Aikido.

O-Sensei realized it in the Omoto religion. I don't think one could fully understand the discipline of Aikido without something like that. Learning by the physical experiences certainly is important, but I think it is also important to experience something new besides Aikido to stimulate one's thought and brain.

It is necessary to study basics things without being disturbed by one's own mood and ...feelings. The lesson method of Aikido is left to the decision of each instructor, and this is a good thing about Aikido. If strictly codified, the independence which is the merit of Aikido is lost.

Of course, balance is important, but I think it is better that one has a good level of skills, specifically posture, the sense of maai, directionality, the principle of the sword line, gaze and so on. It is often seen in enbu (martial art performance) that people just stand straight before a partner waiting for the attack. This is because there is no awareness of the sword line at all.

O-Sensei frequently talked about gravitation training. Gravitation training is for learning how to lead and go together with the partner's movement. One can learn this using katatetori.

Such basics can be learned through body movements. In other words, the principle of Aikido skills will be understood through the apprehension of body movements. Small details of each technique are different, depending on the individuals, but there is always a sense of maai and directionality in any technique. Therefore, as long as there is an understanding of the principle of the skills, it can be applied to all movements.

That understanding is indispensable to progress to a further stage.

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