



The Bulletin is a source for CATSDS students and instructors to share their thoughts and ideas in a "bulletin board" format. Enjoy!

## **Time to Reflect**

One thing that has always been a hallmark of this school is that there is an expectation that the students and the instructors reflect on their training, the Art, their support of the school, their acknowledgement of their seniors, and a myriad of other things. The school expects that the students and its instructors think about and attempt to try to better themselves through the practice of the Art they study.

What does this have to do with anything? Well...actually it has to do with EVERYTHING. If we honestly and sincerely attempt to try and better ourselves in the Art we study, it naturally extends to other facets of our life. Doesn't that sound like a pursuit worth attention?

One other important aspect is the word "tradition" or "traditional". What does this word mean to you? In the context of our school, it means to follow a certain set of martial principles, i.e. Budo/Mudo. Now, there are arguments to say that Budo and Mudo are not the same because of religious-cultural factors, etc. Well, it's really a distraction. Budo and Mudo really boil down to commitment, dedication, perseverance, and a bunch of other words that would fill the rest of this page. The real question is, "Are you up for the challenge?" Only the individual can answer the question. Just don't fool yourself...

## **Upcoming Events**

Sunday, May 11  
Mother's Day

Monday, May 26  
Memorial Day

Saturday, June 14  
Flag Day

Sunday, June 15  
Father's Day

Friday, July 4  
Independence Day

August - Paper Submissions:  
August is the month for paper submissions to be included in the September Bulletin.

August - Expo:  
Be on the lookout for news about time and place for this annual event!

# Students' Thoughts

## **Blending or Clashing**

*By Spencer Van Horn*

Over the past few years I have been having problems with Andrew (my dad). I have been getting angry at him for the dumb things that he says and does and how he treats me and makes me feel. I have been trying to stop this but nothing is really working. I just keep getting angry at him and clashing with him. All I get is clashing. Some of it has gotten worse. When Sensei Medeiros came to Colorado Springs over spring break he explained to me that I can blend and harmonize and avoid a situation. I thought about this for a while and how I could probably do this with a man that only cares about himself and thinks that he knows it all. I have also been told many times by my mom of how to do this, even before Sensei Medeiros came out. But she's my mom. Hopefully I can find new ways to stop this problem.

## **The Center of Your Mind**

*By Fred Hunt*

Great song! I love Ted Nugent. But finding my center is just as elusive as Ki. My mind isn't cooperating. It's just not buying this "Your center is 2-4 inches below my navel" thing. Unless I really concentrate on just that aspect, my center stays in my chest or even my head. Even then, my center's not where it should be for more than a move or two as my mind focuses on other aspects of the technique.

"Move from your center..." It sounds so easy when it's explained to me. But after

nearly 50 years of NOT moving that way, I just can't get and maintain it. During those moments when I do, I'm astonished. It's amazing how natural moving from the center makes the technique feel; how everything falls into place and how uke grunts and smiles with the feel of it moving him or her.

Yeah, well, my mind STILL ain't buyin' it pal! Here's a great quote from a month or so ago. I know JUST how he felt! Sensei: "You have to find your center." Student: "I know exactly where my center is! He's got it!"

## **Irimi and Tenkan**

*Ken Larsen*

In a recent class with Sensei Medeiros, we worked on Irimi (entering) and Tenkan (turning). Sensei was illustrating that Irimi and Tenkan are paramount to Aikido. After participating and thinking about those classes I started to think about how true it was.

These two concepts are woven through almost every Aikido technique and translate to everyday life as well. All day long we are entering and turning all the time. This happens both physically, mentally, and emotionally. Physically, when we are walking in crowded situations we are constantly turning and entering just to keep from running into people. Mentally, how many times have we given another their way rather than insisting on ours? This is Tenkan. How many times have we insisted on something for the good of the other person when they didn't want to? This is Irimi. Emotionally, there are things that make us turn away and things that cause us to lean even closer.

# Students' Thoughts

Feeling our way through these concepts in Aikido training allows us to move and react more fluidly in other areas. In training, when another student grabs your wrist, you feel that person. Are they pulling, pushing, lifting, or pulling down? Many times this determines our reaction to our partner. When you react to these things the Aikido techniques will appear if you allow them to. The more you train the more comfortable you can get and the faster you perceive your partners' intention. Very advanced students can even seem to know your intention before you touch them.

Outside of training we can more readily see our own patterns and the intentions of other and be able to react to adverse situations. This not necessarily in relation to aggressive situations but also in situations where can help others in need.

Now the obvious question is how we can better foster these concepts. Well, the answer always seems to be same...Train, Train, and Train.

## **The Question**

*By Brian Brogren*

I don't know if anybody reading this paper has felt this feeling before, but I have. I will be sitting watching T.V. or working when the question pops in my head, "Why am I here or why am I doing this?" That's always a question that I have pondered in my mind, and another is why are we here and why have we been created. I know that scientists have their theories of the big bang and I don't disagree 100%, although I believe that a greater being has put us here. Then the question is why were we

put here? The only two possibilities that I can think of are that we are being observed or he is trying to choose the next way to create himself.

Then people ask me "If there is a God, then why does he allow mass murders and disasters?" My response is that maybe he is trying to see how his creations respond to certain kinds of stimuli or he just wants to see how we react to one another. For an example, when two shooters entered the New Life Church and killed a number of people, the families ask why God did this and in fact, God didn't, we did. God was just observing what we would do in that situation, and maybe God was there. Recall the security guard that killed one of the shooters; she stated that something told her to be there and to end the hysteria. Now ask yourself, could God have been in that lady, or did he tell her?

Another example that is hard to look back on is 9/11. Now here's the same question, that why did God allow something like this? Now I am not justifying the terrorist's one bit, I hate what they did, but maybe God did not or could not stop it, maybe he just wanted to observe.

So the next time you think about the subject, just sit down and think about your ideas and let them flow. We might never know what's what until we die, but there is no harm in being curious.

## **Feathered Friend**

*By Robyn Gray*

A couple of weeks ago I woke up to the sound of a jack hammer pounding on the



# Students' Thoughts

will be the shortcut you were hoping to find, even though it might not be going in the direction you thought you wanted to go. Somewhere down this road, you come to a fork where you have to make a choice. Will you take the leg that takes you back to the comfortable and familiar, or would you rather explore the leg that disappears into the clouds over that hill with the questionable road conditions and curves? This way lays the Road to Everywhere.

It is said that though countless many have traveled this same road, it has not been the same journey for any two. For some, it's smooth and scenic. For others it's spots of sand or wet leaves, with no rest stops. The road, it is said, is whatever the traveler wants it to be, even though he himself doesn't know what it is he truly expects it to be. Sometimes the road might test your skills as a traveler through bad weather, mechanical breakdowns, or you might even question your own choice of ever even coming down this road. Those who have a need for the comfort of predictability and normalcy... these are the ones who will never, and should never find or travel the Road To Everywhere.

If you are lucky enough to find your way onto this road, and truly see and appreciate what is there for you to discover, the road will become your way of life from that day forward. The road doesn't lead to any final destination, but only to waypoints, for as all real travelers know, the journey itself is the only true purpose, and to fully experience this moment is the most we could hope for. The joy comes each day when you begin; the road ahead is new and unknown.

Satisfaction comes at the end of the day, when tired, sweaty, and hopefully fulfilled, you look back and reflect on the memories of that perfect corner (technique) that opened you to the next level, each of which holds a greater promise of things to come, and every turn, kick, or roll becomes a memory worth saving in your mental logbook.

Will this road ever take us to another plane where we might be able to meet and train with O'Sensei or any of the other masters that are no longer with us in this world (or are they)? Nobody can say for sure right now, but wouldn't that be cool? I look forward to seeing you all there!!!

## **MEMENTO**

*By: David Margrave*

The movie Memento is a murder mystery and psychological study of Leonard Shelby, a victim of anterograde amnesia. Lenny lives an extraordinary life, periodically forgetting everything that happened after his brain injury. Again and again, he takes three steps forward and three steps back. Just like me, when I interrupt my practice of Aikido. Have I progressed from where I was three years ago? While writing my Seven Steps to Shodan paper in preparation for testing, I look backward in time, and wonder how many lessons I forgot along the way. I see an abyss, as does Lenny . . .

Lenny's story unfolds backward. In the opening scene, which serves as a topic paragraph for the whole movie, Lenny shoots a man. This is the end of the story; but from here the movie rewinds. The images on the screen move backward.

## Students' Thoughts

The splattered blood goes back into the victim's body. The bullet retreats into the gun. The victim shouts his final protest. The victim is lured into the building where he will be killed. Then we see a series of flashbacks revealing what happened before the shooting.

The director of *Memento* cannot show us Lenny's fractured mind. So he tells the story backward, giving us a taste of Lenny's daily quandary: "OK, so how did I get here?" A burglar killed Lenny's wife, whacked Lenny over the head, and left him for dead. Brain damage prevents Lenny from forming new long-term memories. His mind is like a computer which randomly reboots, purging from active memory everything he learned since the assault. Like an Alzheimer patient, Lenny makes new friends every day. His motel room landlord likes this, as he can charge rent several times per month.

Lenny hunts down the man who killed his wife, but cannot make sense of his present because he cannot remember his past. He has a clever solution. He takes Polaroid photos of friends and enemies, and makes notes on them. He writes onto his own body the most important "tattoo facts," and commits the rest to paper.

But how can Lenny trust whichever former Lenny(s) wrote the tattoo facts? Who erased those lines from his tattered copy of the police report? Where did he get the money to pay his rent? Why did one of his prior selves warn Lennie – via tattoo – never to answer the phone? And who keeps trying to call him, anyway?

If you know my penchant for seeing everything as a metaphor for life itself, you will find it to be no surprise that I view *Memento* as . . . well, a metaphor for life itself. Lenny cannot form a whole picture of his life because he forgets the lessons he learned. He grimly follows the leads of his tattoo facts. These are mere shadows of his own self, recorded by earlier shadows of his own self.

Lenny discovers the truth about those shadows. Everything he knew turns out to be wrong. This would make for a short and accurate, albeit depressing, tattoo. Lenny chooses instead to continue telling himself a story that, while not necessarily true, provides him – or rather his future selves – with a reason to keep on living.

I never got whacked upside the head the way Lenny did, but in a way I still live in his twisted world, forgetting and regressing. I etch my own tattoo facts into a diary, make notes on Aikido techniques, re-read the same books, and fuss over the same personal issues. I tell myself plausible stories, using flat Polaroid caricatures of myself and others. "Every day, I am getting better in every way." But the truth is that I often forget and re-learn the simplest lessons about techniques, self-discipline, anger and compassion. Lenny's flaw (his inability to learn from history) afflicts nations and individuals, including me. Fortunately, my condition is curable, since it results from the choices I make and the habits I form. I can remember my lessons, and integrate my past with my present, but only when I practice – regularly. Of course I am talking not just about Aikido, but also about life itself.

# Students' Thoughts

## **Wake up America**

*By Gihan Fellah*

Hmmmm, what to write...it is difficult to write anything worthy of the newsletter when I was only given 2 days to do so...however, this does remind me of the lack of communication that seems to be so prevalent in The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies. It also reminds me of how good suggestions on how to improve certain situations are ignored or dismissed. Not just in The Center, but in many areas across the globe. Just look at ethanol fuel. Whose bright idea was it to use a food crop as a fuel? What about the good suggestion of using hemp for ethanol fuel? Hemp quickly grows nearly anywhere, is not a common food source, and does not contain THC. Or how about this one: drive less, carpool more, use public transportation, or use that dusty bike in the garage. Americans will not accept any of these suggestions unless of course, they have no choice. With today's economy in America affecting the rest of the world, price increases across the board (\$10.00 for a gallon of gas is in the near future), inflated housing, and mindless Americans choosing their future president based on which church the candidate attends, give me a break!! What about the real issues affecting America that a future president may be able to affect?

It was not my desire to write a paper full of negativity. There seems to be enough of that spoon fed to us through the media. Nor did I want to write about how the American people are finally forced to conserve and save (something that should have been

done all along). This goes back to what our parents taught us years ago, complacency is detrimental. It is detrimental to us, to our children, to our future as a nation. We are no longer the "United" States; we have become the "Lazy" States of America. Just so in The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies. Complacency has led to the low number of attendance (for new students and long timers). Complacency provides a false sense of security. It is past time to wake up and study the real reasons for low attendance in The Center. It is also time to wake up to the real reasons America is becoming a nation of unpatriotic individuals.

## **Children in Aikido**

*By: Ryan Goettsche*

In February, my oldest son Brandon began training with Sensei Valerie on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Every time he gets home from class he loves to show what he learned in the class and is always excited for the next class. He has never said that he would rather stay home and watch Ben10 or play with his Transformer toys. He looks, listens and learns from Sensei and truly enjoys his time in the dojo.

I believe that children, as in most areas of development, have a natural ability for martial arts like Aikido because they are so open to what is being offered and they have very powerful imaginations. These two characteristics of youth allow them to train with an open mind and cultivate their Ki energy. Many people who begin training later in life already have preconceptions of martial training whether having trained in an art in the past or having seen movies and

# Students' Thoughts

read magazines displaying the techniques. Those memories can be difficult to let go and start fresh but children don't have those memories so every aspect of the dojo, the class dynamics and the art itself is fresh and inviting.

Ki development, being one of the pillars of Aikido training, can be such a difficult concept to understand and cultivate that many people may think that if they have difficulty with it, a child would have an even larger struggle with it. But I don't believe that's the case. To watch children interact socially and use their imaginations to create make believe worlds and act out their favorite super hero abilities is something that most of us adults have lost the ability to do but much of Aikido training requires a similar mindset. We train as if

multiple people are surrounding us, we imagine we are touching all of the dojo walls and beyond, we have to imagine the Ki flowing through our bodies along with our partner's Ki. Isn't that the same thing as a child imagining they are flying like a bird, stretching their limbs like Mr. Fantastic, or teleporting to another space in time?

Of course the physical training and interaction in Aikido are also very beneficial in helping children with balance, coordination, respect and self discipline but since the concept of Ki training is unique to Aikido compared to many martial arts, I think that that children will become very well grounded and centered if they begin training early and that mental and physical stability will permeate to every part of their life as they grow.

## Paper Submittal Procedure

As you all know, paper submissions are required for all students (that includes instructors...we're all students of the Arts we practice!), to be included in The Bulletin. The Bulletin is designed to be published every fourth month in the year, i.e. three publications per year. Therefore, we have the schedule as follows:

- **August is the month for paper submissions to be included in the September edition.**
- December is the month for paper submissions to be included in the January edition.
- April is the month for paper submissions to be included in the May edition.

Ideally, paper submissions should be turned in the first week of the month prior to the month of publication. For example, please submit papers in the first week of August for the September edition.

Papers (preferably MS Word format) can be emailed to Sabom Parenteau at [ctsds@comcast.net](mailto:ctsds@comcast.net). If you do not have access to a computer, write your paper out and maybe you can get one of your fellow classmates to type it for you. Maybe they'll do it for a home cooked meal or possibly some other form of bribe. It also helps if you proof-read and spell check your publication before sending it.

Let's all try our best to make each publication better than the last!

## Hagerstown Aikido Club



Pictured from left to right: Sensei Medeiros, Katherine, Gretchen, Shannon, Barbara, Keith  
Sensei Medeiros is very excited because, like Robyn, he has a womans' class!

Photo by Katherine

## My Thoughts on Aikido

By: Barb Nixon

My future sister-in-law, Katherine, and I have been attending Sensei Vernon's Aikido class for one month now. Although I didn't know quite what to expect, I have been pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoy it. I originally joined for the exercise and to do something different. I didn't expect the discipline which comes along with Aikido was going to be so powerful. Sensei Vernon teaches us not only "the moves" but the history of Aikido and it's teachings.

Several weeks ago, Sensei mentioned a quote which is one of the basics for Aikido which is "Calm in the face of chaos" considering that most lives (mine included) are very chaotic it touched me in the most profound way. I work a very stressful job, where busy is the norm. During the last month work has been ultra busy and the tasks put upon me and my staff is more than most complete in a week. We had to work very tight time frames with a host of physical labor mixed in. This helped get me through it with calm and dignity.

I would encourage those who battle stress or want something more from life, to join a class. Enjoy the experience, the interaction with new people and get some exercise to boot. What do you have to lose??? Who knows, you may be pleasantly surprised, I was.

# Instructors' Thoughts

## Aiki-health

by Rob Roberts

Death is the ultimate tyranny. As Medeiros Sensei says often and Jude-san said in the last newsletter, Do is about longevity. O'Sensei trained into his 80s; I wish to do the same. Here then, are the two steps to continue training into your 80s: First, live into your 80s. Second, keep training. So the question becomes, how do I live into my 80s? I lived by practicing Aiki-health. Recently I was in Maryland to visit my father in the hospital. His doctors had given him dire prognoses, indicating that he had days to live. I made the trip to Maryland twice, once for 3 weeks, once for a week, and visited my father nearly every day. Each time I tried to impress upon my father the power of positive thinking. Medeiros Sensei and Kimberly went with me during one of my visits. I introduced Sensei to my father; my father asked how long I had been training in Aikido. Suddenly with my Sensei of 16 years standing in the room, Aikido was transformed from a word that he heard me say occasionally...to his son's way of life. Later I talked to him again about the power of the mind over illness; I pointed out that he had not had any ill episode for the entire time that I had visited, and said, "that's all up here," and pointed to my temple. I believe my father is breathing today because I was able to get through to him. My father will not live forever, but I want him to have as much life as he wants and be comfortable when the inevitable occurs. A positive state of mind is part of Aiki-health.

Years ago, Medeiros Sensei listed 5 acceptable reasons for missing class:

1. Death (certainly you are not expected to train if you are dead, but what he meant was death in the family).
2. Injury or Illness.
3. Work.
4. I believe familial obligations were one of them.
5. I don't remember number five because when Sensei listed these reasons we were preparing for testing and we were training every day except Sunday; (oh yes, every day).

Often times I was exhausted and really didn't want to train, but these are the times when you need training the most. So I would begin to ask myself the 5 questions; number 1, "Am I dead?" (using the absurd application of the rule to myself.). If I answered no, I would launch myself out the door toward the dojo. I never made it to number 5. I discuss these reasons because even though Sensei made these provisions, he rarely applies them to himself. Once he said that if he ever lost an arm, he would ask the nurse where his clothes are, because he had to get to the dojo. I remember thinking at the time, "you know, I believe him." Later Sensei lost part of his finger in an accident; he was back on the mat (albeit in pain) with astounding speed. He also trained on the day of his mother's funeral after the ceremony. You see, Aikido is therapeutic. Many of you have probably never noticed that Sensei is missing part of one of his fingers. I believe this is because his Ki is balanced. To look at his hands,

# Instructors' Thoughts

they are not bilaterally symmetrical, but his extension back and forth, left and right, heaven and earth, are in balance. Balance is part of Aiki-health.

If you are ever in a self defense situation, you must not allow your attacker to see that you are in pain. If he sees you limping, he will kick the leg you do not favor. Nor must you wince or express pain in any part of your body or the attacker will target that point. The only way to prepare for this possibility is to condition your mind to be outside of the exhaustion and pain your body feels on the mat. Words cannot express how this is done; it comes with experience. Sometimes I'm able to do this. Just this week while training with Sensei Render on one of the first techniques I felt totally winded; I thought, I'll never make it to the end of class. However, my fatigue dissipated toward the end and even though we were doing ukemi intensive techniques like udekime, I felt fully energized. Call it endorphins, call it Ki, I had transcended exhaustion. The same happens when I apply "no mind" to aches and pains; I simply don't feel them, at least on the mat. Extend this to emotional pain off the mat as well; people using mental aggression with verbal attacks will find no weakness to exploit. As O'Sensei said, "train in a vibrant and joyful manner." Try this exercise; smile even when you don't feel like it. You will find that just by making yourself smile, your spirits will improve; it can't be resisted. Transcending pain and fatigue is part of Aiki-health.

Finally, protect your partner. Do not throw your uke into a wall. Do not throw your uke into other aikidoka. Do not throw your uke

into anything; you will need him or her to train with later. Protecting your partner is part of Aiki-health.

## **Failed Iron Lung Technique**

*By Jude Miller*

At the beginning of the year, I had a startling realization...The Arts do not wait. I found myself in the hospital with crippling back, side, and chest pains. The doctors soon informed me that I had a blood clot in my lung, and that I needed to be admitted and monitored. I spent the next couple of days in a morphine-induced haze before I was released. The doctors had many, many restrictions for me. I couldn't eat green vegetables. I couldn't shave with a razor. I was not to take any bumps or bruises of any kind under any circumstances. Any of these could lead to 1) another blood clot or 2) uncontrollable bleeding, whether it be internal or external. The last restriction is what bothered me the most.

I thought "How am I going to train and improve, especially in Aikido?" I knew I just couldn't wait to recover to the doctor's total satisfaction before stepping foot on the mat again. This situation was just not acceptable to me. My instructor's words ran through my mind. "Budo is not about convenience. It's about inconvenience!" This is about the most inconvenient thing that could've happened to me, so the opportunity to practice Budo must be great! My mind was made up immediately on what to do. I have to still do my best and train. I have to show up to class, as normal, and train the only way I can...with Ki and

# Instructors' Thoughts

precision. I have to change my focus. And this is what I do, while still keeping to the doctor's orders.

I'm still on heavy restrictions, but I show up to class every chance I get. I get on the mat, I train, and I train with more Ki than before because my body is not strong. This has taught me lessons, of course. "Old Man" Aikido and "Old Man" Tangsoodo have new meaning to me, as I have a better understanding of how the Arts can still be practiced when the body breaks down. I have a better understanding of how the Arts should be practiced even when my body is physically strong. Before this incident, I was not aware of how much I was truly relying on my physical strength and prowess when training. Now I have nothing but Ki, and the precision of technique to rely on. Since I can't practice ukemi physically, I practice it in my mind. I have further proof, for myself, that the Arts can be practiced anywhere and at anytime. The only time to train is now --the Arts do not wait.

## **Just Rats in a Maze**

*By Kyosa Tim Speaks*

Have you ever felt like you're just part of some big social experiment being conducted by extraterrestrial beings with a warped sense of humor? You know, like those lab rats in a maze that the scientists study. No? Good, then perhaps you can consider yourself normal, whatever that means. It's likely I've watched too many Sci-Fi movies. But seriously, have you ever stopped to think about how many so called "free decisions" you make on a daily basis

that are dictated by your societies rules, laws, or simply the circumstances as you perceive them? For example, most of us in the adult world drive to and from work every day, more or less obeying traffic laws such as red means stop, green means go and yellow means go faster. We go to work because we have to make money to feed, clothe, and shelter our families and/or ourselves. We have to provide these things for our families and ourselves or else we perish. So the bottom line is most of the "choices" we make as human beings are dictated by some other rule or circumstance and therefore are not made without some form of coercion. The ultimate coercion being, make this "choice" or die.

Conversely, in the practice of MooDo/BooDo I believe we're attempting to break away from this pattern of mindlessly meandering through life like rats in a maze. Not to take anything away from the superior skill and speed that rats have at negotiating said maze, but it's hard to argue that rats have more choices scurrying free about the sewer systems. Like the rats in laboratory maze experiments, those who practice MooDo/BooDo principles are attempting to become more and more proficient at negotiating a much larger, more complex maze that many people refer to as life. However my concern is that if we merely focus on skillfully negotiating the maze of life we might miss the grander reality that lies above.

Although MooDo/BooDo practice tends to mean something slightly different to each practitioner, I view it as the way of cultivating one's self in positive manner by

# Instructors' Thoughts

steady practice of martial self-discipline. By positive I mean to improve our lives by making us happier, healthier human beings who are able to harmonize with our reality rather than conflict with it. For the most tangible part, this means harmonizing with our fellow human beings. Does this imply that following all the rules of society, doing as we're told, and marching to the tune of the status quo is the true way of harmony? Perhaps, but to do so without knowing you're doing it, or why, is a recipe for disaster; my favorite example of this being the infamous Nazi Germany of WWII. Certainly going against the accepted norms of society simply to be contrary is not the correct path either and cannot lead to a harmonious existence.

Ultimately, there must be some middle path where we can both skillfully negotiate this maze of life and develop the skills to transcend it. If we who attempt to follow MooDo/BooDo wish to become truly aware, I believe we must study the choices we make in life, both good and bad. We must become more and more aware of the external and internal forces that drive us to make our everyday choices that form the maze of our existence. Likely, I suspect, the reasons for our ineptitude at negotiating this maze lies solely in our minds. Be free and go eat some cheese.

## **Are You Looking at Your Feet?**

*By Hal Render*

One thing I have noticed about myself is that I walk differently when I am with someone than when I am by myself. When I am

walking with my wife or son, for example, I keep my head up and look around. When I am walking by myself, I often keep my head down, looking at the path just in front of my feet and little else.

When I walk with someone else I keep my head up because I am turning to look at the person I am with, looking at the scenery, scanning the distance for things coming toward us (pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, etc.), and so on. I am trying to stay aware of my surroundings, both because it becomes a topic of conversation, and, when I am with my son, I am trying to be aware of possible threats like stray dogs, unobservant motorists, and the like. When I walk by myself, I often tend to be lost in thought, trusting in my other senses to warn me of any oncoming threats, and consequently I tend to be aware of little more than the ground immediately in front of me. Noticing this has caused me to reflect on things related to training in Aikido.

When we train, we often get into a mode of extreme self-analysis. We see our partner before us, and we are acutely aware of the part of them which is leading the attack, be it their hands, their feet or some weapon. We are also acutely aware of our own hands and feet, our center (one hopes), and so on. However, we are frequently surprised by things we did not expect, such as another person entering into our space or our partner moving in an unexpected manner. This indicates that our awareness has shrunk to a set of very limited fragments of the environment around us. This is not uncommon, and it is often recounted in stories of people who undergo real attacks. It is dangerous, however, because

# Instructors' Thoughts

it means that things we should be aware of may escape our attention.

When you train, you must train to overcome this tendency. Aikido is about blending with partners, and blending requires awareness of your partners in their entirety. I say "partners" because you need to be aware not only of the person with whom you are in immediate contact but with the other people on the mat as well. Of course, someone on the other side of mat is less likely to intercept your space as someone right next to you, but all of these people must to some degree be part of your active consciousness.

You may think that this means that you will be less aware of what your own body is doing. To some degree this is true. But it also means your own thoughts won't be interrupting the flow of your body's movements. The myriad small nerve and muscle actions that Aikido requires cannot all be tracked by your conscious mind, and to think that you control them thusly is simply wrong. You have to train your body to operate based on situational response and active intent and not on your mind controlling every small motion. The reason Aikido and all Budo training is repetitive is because you have to teach your body to move in certain ways without your active direction. Real world "attack" situations require you have already taught your body to respond to a certain situation in a certain way, so that it can operate independently of your conscious mind.

I ask you to ponder these things in the coming weeks and months and to try to

employ them in your training. What you will find is that your training will become quieter, more intense, and more satisfying at both an emotional and spiritual level, because you will begin to practice the mind/body oneness that is true Budo.

As practitioners of martial arts, we must be aware of ourselves and our surroundings. When your instructor says, "Eyes up! Don't look at your hands! Don't look at your feet!" He or she is really saying, "Pay attention to that which is around you!" When your instructor says, "Don't think, move!" he or she is really saying, "Get out of your head and back into the world!"

## **A Guide to Samdan**

*By Mike Parenteau*

I can recall a number of years ago a paper Sabom gave to a number of us titled, "A Guide to Nidan". I still have this document and look at it from time to time and remember a certain individual freaking out after reading it. Ah...the memories. I thought it would be appropriate to have something similar. The real question is, "Is he qualified to write such a thing?!" I'm certainly not at the Samdan level to understand, but I think I've been with Sabom long enough to know how to get there. I hope some of these things remind us all why we train:

- Perseverance is the nucleus of Do.
- Frustration and resentment lead to waste.
- Be thoughtful to beginners in word and deed.

# Instructors' Thoughts

- Unlearn what you THINK you know and embrace a new beginning.
- Be thankful as the Art you study is yours if you accept it honestly.
- Mental exercitation engages the spirit.
- Engaging the spirit reinforces training.
- Diligent training enables mental exercitation.
- A true master is not promoted, but forged through study of his art.

It is not enough to look at the narrow view of simply training. If your training has no meaning, then the Art does not exist.

## **YouTube.com: A Window to the World and a Window for Your Own Training**

*By Vernon Medeiros*

As I sit here contemplating on the subject of what I should write my paper about, I find myself researching on *You Tube* several clips related to various martial arts instruction, training, rank testing and demonstrations.

I am amazed by the volumes of video information that is available to explore. What I find even more amazing is that there is so much that a person can learn from this strange valuable resource.

People are practicing all over the world! I find this fascinating. Disregarding all the violent stuff I am moved by the fact that people are striving to seek to improve themselves through martial arts instruction.

I suspect a large amount of these video clips are in violation of copyright restrictions. Although these videos are plentiful I feel a sincere student should seek proper instruction because without proper knowledge of traditional arts the propagation of violence will continue.

The school I belong to attempts to correct these deficiencies by soliciting from interested students their personal reasons for seeking to join or gain membership with our organization. After learning their reasons I then tell them my reasons and what I firmly expect from them.

As one intermittent student stated to me recently; "...so you're saying it is all or nothing." I said No! What I am saying is if your claim is that you want to learn then you will need to make an honest effort to be here every class, period. No excuses, no complaints.

In other words I strongly believe sincere students will make an honest attempt to participate and support fellow students with their diligent efforts toward self improvement. I feel that if you cannot honor your goals toward self improvement, then you are not doing your best. The true purpose in training in martial arts is to be able to demonstrate this tenet weekly. This is the proper way.

With this in mind I went on the internet to locate some budo information. I located a few choice examples to illustrate my point. I cannot remember what site but here is the condensed version. According to this Budo Organization:

# Instructors' Thoughts

## BUDO

*The main purpose of budo is to cultivate your character, improve your ability to make proper value judgments, and foster a well disciplined and capable individual through participation in physical and mental training utilizing martial techniques.*

This I find is a decent definition no matter what Japanese or Korean art you study. The article further states the reasons why we study and physically need to practice regularly. After World War II, the values of Budo were then understood as the following:

*Budo is a physical art suitable for anyone who pursues the fulfillment of one's human potential by consistent training in martial arts. Budo is the foundation of physical disciplines that pursue victory without fighting. The objective of Budo study is the development of the self, regardless of physical strength, age and gender. Budo was regarded as cultivating the spirit because it allows people to study methods with which to control an opponent without resorting to physical confrontation.*

These words are consistent with what I have been taught in Aikido, Iaido and Tangsoodo. I try to apply them in my daily life. Dishonest people will always try to steal from you either your money or your time.

## KEIKO

*When practicing daily, one must constantly follow decorum, adhere to the fundamentals of the art, and resist the temptation to solely pursue mere technical skill rather than the unity of mind, body and technique.*

This seems reasonable to me. This is what I was taught. If a student walked in and told me they wanted to join but they will only show up to train when they felt like it, I would tell them to come back when they are willing to commit to a sincere schedule. My reasons are based on what a dojo/ dojang should be. If a student wants a gym schedule, then go join a gym.

## DOJO

*The dojo is a sacred place for training one's mind and body. Here, one must maintain discipline, proper etiquette, and formality. The training area must be a quiet, clean, safe solemn environment.*

I agree with this statement and this is precisely why I need to remember this fact and review my own etiquette.

## TEACHING

*When teaching trainees, in order to be an effective teacher, he/she should always strive to cultivate his/her character, and further his/her own skill and discipline of mind and body. She/he should not be swayed by winning or losing, both in and outside of the dojo or display arrogance about his/her superior skill, but rather he/she should retain the attitudes suitable for a role-model.*

Whether you are a teacher or a student the requirement is really the same.

## PROMOTION

*When promoting budo, one should follow traditional values, seek substantial training, contribute to research, and do ones utmost to perfect and preserve this traditional art with an understanding of international points of view.*

# Instructors' Thoughts

Well folks, there you have it! This info is consistent with what I know so if you wish to revive your martial arts interests and want to be inspired because you have either given up on your training or experience difficulty finding your way to the dojo/dojang, then maybe, just maybe *YouTube* can help you find your way back. Good luck!