

# THE KIAI

FALL 1999

Newsletter of THE AIKIDO INSTITUTE

Volume V, Issue 3

## SERVICE AS PART OF AIKIDO TRAINING

At the presentation to former uchi deshi I touched on a key aspect of an uchi deshi training that is not generally known: service. I'll discuss here how this concept applies in a larger sense to our daily aikido training.

We practice service daily in the Dojo. Some examples are: taking ukemi, bringing flowers for the shomen, helping a beginner, and sweeping the mat.

### What is service?

The word "service" is derived from the word "slave" which has an unfortunate historical connotation. Nonetheless, devoted service, irrespective of who performs it, is what elevates an ordinary person to higher spiritual states.



From the perspective of a servant an act of service consists of four elements: (1) an object of focus (a person, an idol or a cause), (2) an awareness of the needs of the object, (3) a willingness to give oneself to fulfill the needs of the object unquestioningly (4) no expectation of any reward or return.

How do we practice service on the mat?

In the context of energy movement, when I serve another person I extend my energetic radar toward that person and lock in so that I can detect the needs of that person and fulfill them. That is what lovers do on a date. That is what we do as uke when we train on the mat. We lock



our energy onto our partner so that we can blend with her energy. In this way, we practice service when we maintain our energetic connection with our partner when doing techniques.

This connection should be unquestioning, that is undisturbed by our questioning mind. During a technique, the moment we evaluate or let an emotion set in we stop being part of the flow and we lose the connection.

This connection should be unconditional. To truly serve your training partner, you should keep giving him 100% of your energy while engaged in the technique, even if he does not seem to appreciate your gift, even if he behaves with arrogance, or even if you don't like him as a person.

Therefore, if I am to serve my training partner, I should focus on his needs and limitations rather than just do the technique in my way at my level. That is, I

should adjust the speed, power and complexity of movement to my partner's level.

### Off the mat

There are several opportunities to practice service off the mat, such as attending special events sponsored by the Dojo, helping to organize Dojo activities and helping in propagating Aikido. This internal service is what differentiates a dojo from a business-oriented gymnasium.

We can extend this practice to our daily life. Here is a common example: a mother serves her family so well that at dinner time, as soon as her child looks up from his dish to scan the table she has already grabbed his favorite salad dressing and put it in front of him. In the same way we can practice attending to another person's needs whom we come in contact with daily.

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If the purpose is to learn, the recipient of service does not have to merit it. You can serve your spouse, your parents, your children, your president, your sensei or your country even if they do not seem to deserve the service. Just use them as targets for practice. You don't have to wait for the room to get dirty to clean it. You don't have to wait for the shomen to get dusty before you wipe it. Your president does not have to be an honest person for you to take orders from him. Of course the more worthy the recipient the easier is your practice.

There is a branch of Yoga called Karma Yoga in which the practice consists mostly of hard work as a service to humanity.

How does serving others help me?

I mentioned that an expectation of reward negates the meaning of service. But service is rewarding in several ways.

The desire to serve stems from an inborn instinct to return to the fold and get closer to our creator. The more we become aware of the fact that we all came from, and belong to, a larger being, the more we feel the need to serve all others who are parts of the larger being. The reverse is also true. The more we practice serving others, the more we become aware that we are somehow linked at the most basic level to the others that we serve. Therefore, practicing service satisfies an inborn human instinct and brings a sense of fulfillment that cannot be obtained in any other ways. Serving others strengthens the feeling that we are part of a bigger being and increases our sense of security and self-confidence.

Because of the energetic contact, the act of serving brings the servant closer to the recipient. From a spiritual viewpoint service eliminates the gaps between oneself and one's environment, thus promoting harmony and peace.

At a more pragmatic level, one who serve others well also acquires three important skills: a heightened awareness, the skill to maintain focus for an extended period and the skill to blend. These are the key skills for self-defense. The height-

ened awareness allows one to sense or intuit an aggressor's move as soon as it is conceived, that is before it is manifested. Then the focusing and blending skills allow one to resolve the conflict in a harmonious way. These are the skills that uchi deshis learn while serving their senseis.

HOA NEWENS



### ALWAYS SAY "THANK YOU"

Sempai and kohai, we are gathered here on the occasion of my graduation as uchi deshi and as a white belt. What I leave with you is some of the insight I have gained in my time here.

Always say, "Thank you." A year of uchi deshi trials has proven that your sempai will treat you kinder if you greet their correction with a smile and a bow. You may not always want to say thank you, but trust me, it will save you weeks of extra strong nikkyo's if you do.

Roll. Roll with vigor and with joy. The mat IS your friend; treat it appropriately.

Respect your elders, as they hold the information to Aikido that will one day allow you to be an elder. Look to them, watch them, imitate them if you can, just don't make them angry.

NEVER tell Kim Sensei that a technique he has executed doesn't hurt. This is a key point. If you listen to nothing else I say, hear this and heed my warning. I made that mistake, ONCE.

Learn to sew. Find a way to patch your pants strong enough so that they won't fall off, and so that it won't take you all day to mend them either. If all else fails, duct tape can be your friend. When placed on the inside of your gi pants, it is difficult to see the hole. If you wear a hakima, I have seen black tape used quite

*"In order to discover new lands,  
one must be willing to lose sight of  
the shore for a very long time."*

ANONYMOUS

effectively as a patch. See Peter for details.

Attack. Attack. Attack. A wise man told me that the more pure your attack, the better your ukemi, the better your training. Aikido is not for wimps, so don't act like one with those yokomen strikes.

Cooking 101: Many delectable meals can be made with a hot plate, pasta, and some imagination. One night, just try to make a meal with one pot, and your burner on medium. Let go and see what happens. See uchi deshi for recipes.

A word to new uchi deshi. Clean like you never have before. If you were a slob before you entered the dojo, get over it, and get cleaning.

Learn how to smile on the outside, while on the inside, well, let's just say that you don't feel like smiling. This is key. The same wise man who told me to attack also told me to smile. Not only does smiling help you to maintain smooth relations with your training partners, it also makes high falls less painful. I am not sure how this works, but it does, so grin away.

Cultivate PATIENCE. Remember that that new person who is cranking on your arm was once you, and respect your growth while fostering theirs.

I have learned these lessons with sweat, some tears, and much joy. Approach your training with positive energy, and that energy will be returned to you manifold. Most of the above are the ramblings of an old uchi deshi, take from it what you wish, and disregard the rest. But, trust me on the "Thank you's."

MEGAN SWEET



### SPACE AVAILABLE

This is a small comment about ma-ai – or spacing, an aspect of both art and aikido, which for me is an alluring point of study. The point that seems significant to me for this particular comment has to do with ma-ai as the "right place". So I will begin with a few quotes from *The Secrets of Aikido*, by John Stevens, for some

points of reference. Stevens says, "A distinctive feature of Asian culture is Ma which can mean 'room,' 'space,' 'interval,' 'timing,' or 'rhythm.' On a broader level, ma-ai means to appreciate another's space, to learn how to adjust to various conditions, and to develop a good sense of timing in human affairs – just what aikido is all about."

In martial arts, ma-ai is critical. In training, we demonstrate that ma-ai is the proper distance between uke and nage – not too far away because then there is no real attack and therefore no reason for nage to counter. If you are too close, you may find yourself hemmed in or foolishly walking right into a potentially vulnerable position or attack. If uke provides an attacking force with clear intention, then uke must enter into the space between uke and nage and critically change the ma-ai, otherwise there is no reason for nage to even bother with a technique. I have embarrassed myself more than once in this manner. Thinking that I am attacking nage, I only find my punch or strike hanging limply in the air and nage (usually sensei) realizing that the attack is going nowhere is standing unmoved.

In art – be it a canvas, graphic, flowers or a garden, the spacing of objects is also critical. You cannot study or create art without space and the understanding of how space creates composition. In paintings the empty spaces, the spaces where there are no objects, are called negative space, but I find that to be a misnomer or at least an inadequate understanding of space. The beauty and energy of ma spacing and how it provides the essential balance to a composition always intrigues me.

In aikido I see that ma is the same – essential to balance. As I was practicing irimi nage, I saw that uke was the object, but I also saw the space beside uke and that it was not negative, but rather open and filled with ki. Amazingly I could enter deeply into the space and not be concerned with the attack. And just as amazingly, I was in the "right place" – behind uke. If I had been thinking about uke and how I must "get behind" I would not have

been able to do it. From this experience, I began to experiment with entering the spaces that were surrounding uke as a way of changing the focus of "doing something to uke" to something that for me is more about aikido and its harmony and balance.

From this it is easy to see how ma relates to timing, interval and rhythm with more to be experimented with and discovered, but as I said in the beginning – this is a small comment.

MICHAL CRAWFORD-ZIMRING

*"Do ordinary things with  
extraordinary love."*

MOTHER TERESA

### THE AIKIDO INSTITUTE 1999 SAITO SHIHAN SEMINAR BANQUET SONG

Shouted to the tune of Tom Petty and The Heartbreaker's number one hit, *It's All Right If You Love Me*.

Lyrics composed by Kim Peuser Sensei and Gavin Broder.

*It's all right if you pin me  
It's all right if you don't.  
I'm not afraid of you pinning me  
hard baby,  
I get the feeling you won't.*

*There's no sense in pretending  
your hammi gives you away.  
You know as I do I'm out of ice  
packs,  
We've said all there is to say.*

Chorus

*Nikkyo - go ahead do it to me  
Nikkyo - better do it right.  
Sensei I'm standing here  
Can't you see.  
Nikkyo - It's all right.*

*Ace bandages on my knees  
My toes are covered with tape.*

*Now I'm all out of Advil  
My body is full of pain.  
It's all right if I'm mistaken  
I may be a little insane.*

Chorus

*Nikkyo - go ahead do it to me  
Nikkyo - better do it right.  
Sensei I'm standing here  
Can't you see.  
Nikkyo It's all right.*



### DIRECTIONS TO THE BOLINAS GASSHUKU

1: From the Dojo, start out going North on TELEGRAPH AVE towards 51ST ST by turning right.

2: Turn LEFT onto 51ST ST.

3: 51ST ST becomes 52ND ST.

4: Take the I-580 exit towards SAN FRANCISCO/HAYWARD.

5: Merge onto I-580 WEST RAMP.

6: Merge onto I-580 W.

7: Take I-80 WEST RAMP towards SAN FRANCISCO.

8: Merge onto I-80 W.

9: Take the exit towards NINTH STREET/CIVIC CENTER.

10: Turn LEFT onto HARRISON ST.

11: Turn RIGHT onto 9TH ST.

12: Turn SLIGHT LEFT onto HAYES ST.

13: Turn RIGHT onto VAN NESS AVE.

14: Turn LEFT onto LOMBARD ST.

15: Stay straight to go onto RICHARDSON AVE.

16: RICHARDSON AVE becomes US-101.

17: Take the CA-1 NORTH exit towards MILL VALLEY/STINSON BEACH.

18: Merge onto CA-1.

19: Turn LEFT onto OLEMA BOLINAS RD.

20: Turn RIGHT onto BRIGHTON AVE.

21: Turn LEFT onto ALTURA AVE.

22: Turn RIGHT onto CRESCENTE AVE.

Total Distance: 40.0 miles

Total Estimated Time: 1 hour, 26 minutes

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Aikido Institute  
**THE KIAI**



## THE DOJO CODE

*I always look, listen and learn.*

*I bow with humility to receive from O'Sensei,  
the Sensei and fellow students.*

*I do my best, share and persevere in my practice.*