

THE KIAI

SPRING 2001

Newsletter of THE AIKIDO INSTITUTE

Volume VII, Issue 1

30 YEARS OF AIKIDO

FROM CONFLICT TO HARMONY.

During the early 1990s at my former employer, I had to implement certain cost-cutting measures that affected the way we did audit work. One of my staff at the time (Let's call him Grump) rebelled against the changes, instigated insurgency among the rest of the staff then finally left for another job. I knew I had failed in some respect as a manager. However, some years later, to my surprise, Grump came to my farewell luncheon before I left for Yolo County, shook my hand and, in a sincere manner, thanked me for my patience and for the professional knowledge that I have imparted to him. I must have done something right. With hindsight I offer below an analysis of how I resolved the conflict, pointing out the successful strategies and those that did not work so well.

Let me begin with a simple definition of conflict and outline in simple terms a strategy that I believe is the best for resolving interpersonal conflict. For our purpose, we will say that harmony exists when people's energies blend together and flow freely; and that there is conflict between two persons when the confluence of their energies creates a temporary stagnation.

Let's assume that we are one of the persons and call the other "opponent" and label his energy "aggressive". One way to relieve the stagnation and restore harmonious flow is the following four-step strategy:

1. Connect with the opponent.
2. Receive the aggressive energy.
3. Align with the aggressive energy.
4. Direct the aggressive energy to neutral ground.

A simple and logical concept you might say, but in my experience its successful application requires involvement of our total being, that is, body, heart and mind. Let me go through these four steps in reference to the Grump case.



Connect. For our purpose, "connect" means reach out and be in touch with the core of the would-be opponent. This technique requires a pro-active attitude and an alert mental state. I failed here. In my daily contact with staff I was not aware of subtle changes in Grump's behavior, which were warning signs of the brewing rebellion. I talked to Grump daily but I was talking to the superficial person, I did not really connect with his deeper self to be aware that his energy had begun to hit the perceived walls that I set up. I should have been more in touch with the real persons in my staff.

"Connect with the opponent" requires us to constantly project our energy sensors out and constantly be aware of the changes in our surroundings. This technique requires us to be ready to initiate the first move, even for purpose of defense; we should control the situation at the outset, rather than let the situation cause us to react. As a side note, "connect with the opponent" is the concept behind the technique of "enemy infiltration" used as a counterinsurgency measure.

The lesson that I learned here was that I should be constantly sensitive to the changes in people around me. With a sustained daily effort to connect with people I gradually get the sense that we are all connected and that we are all part of a larger Being. Could this be the beginning of some spiritual understanding? I can begin to understand how some enlightened humans become invincible: They have such a strong connection with whoever fights them that it would make the aggressor fight himself if he starts a fight.

Receive. At this stage of the conflict the opponent's energy has gathered sufficient momentum to manifest as an aggressive force. "Receive" means to allow this force to pen-

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strate our defense to the extent that is sufficient for us to size it up and understand it.

I did this with Grump. I invited him into my office several times and listened to him as he related his tribulations. I listened intently, and sincerely tried to understand the reason for his unhappiness. Looking back, I think it was this empathy from my part that Grump appreciated the most and that made him come to my farewell party.

In our daily life, perhaps because of fear or insecurity, we often put up our defense wall too soon or set up too many layers of defense, before we have the chance to understand what is coming at us.

“Receive” means to be open and vulnerable but does not mean that we should open all the doors and invite the enemy in to our deepest core. We should receive while staying connected (per step one). That is, we yield in a controlled manner, while keeping the aggressive force in check. I allowed Grump to express his dissatisfaction but in a controlled environment and while I was following his mental move closely. I was “with” him the whole time.

Applying this technique requires that we resist the urge of fight or flight. In the face of aggression we should instead face it and receive it as describe above.

Align. Herein lies the art of conflict resolution. As we receive the aggressive energy we move to get out of its path and re-align ourselves behind it. This is the most difficult of the four steps outlined above and takes years of practice to perfect.

I did this with Grump. I truly wanted to understand why he felt the way he did so I stepped into his shoes and tried to see eye-to-eye with him. When he ranted on with his complaints and accusations, I listened but did not take them to heart; I did not stay on the path of the aggressive energy and let it crush me. I paused after his key statements and re-ran them in my mind to grasp his viewpoint. I also re-read all the pertinent memoranda that I sent to staff and other policy and procedures instructions, imagining how I would feel as a staff person.

I even went to Grump’s office and sat at his chair behind his desk, checked the ergonomics, etc. to see if I could detect any culprit of my employee’s dissatisfaction. I chatted with his wife who was working in a different unit to see if I could detect any sign of conjugal distress. As a result, I gathered information that indicated that Grump had been preparing himself for a change in career. This desire to change and the accompanying stress had re-channeled his energy in a new direction that was at odd with the environment that I was trying to create in the office.

Grump’s new energy could not flow freely when it met my energy that was reflected in the policies and procedures. But once I aligned my viewpoint with his perspective, I

understood the nature of the aggression and its underlying cause. Once I understood this, I felt that the conflict was almost gone.

Redirect. At this stage we are already aligned with the aggressive energy and now take it into a new direction that would benefit both us and the aggressor – to a neutral ground. The way I did this with Grump was to chat with him about his long-term plan and help him identify the pros and cons of the various options. He wanted a career move but did not want to leave the current employer. However, there was no room there, and he hesitated to take a job with a new organization. Once I could see his preferred option I encouraged him to take the jump. He decided and left the organization. His energy flowed freely again. The conflict was resolved.

Note this difference. If Grump had resigned in anger to take up the new job, the end-result would appear the same as above, but the conflict would not have been “resolved”.

In conclusion, although I did not properly follow the four-step strategy, I managed to restore harmony between Grump and myself. I actually developed this strategy after this incident and applied it retrospectively to validate it. I have seen this work in several other occasions with other people and in my personal life. Its works best when its elements have been assimilated deeply and its application become second nature. Although this assimilation takes years of deliberate practice, any one can benefit from this strategy by consciously applying it. More effort is required for a non-adept, but the peace and harmony that can be achieved is worth all of it.

HOA NEWENS



AN UCHI DESHI LEARNS SOMETHING

*(Rated R for violence and adult situations.
You think I'm kidding but I'm not.)*

While I was actually uchi deshi I didn’t really feel myself learning very much. Maybe because I didn’t really feel much of anything after the first two months or so. And the first two months the main thing I felt was bruised. Inside and out. My bones hurt: my poor small foot bones on the hard wooden loft ladder at 5:00 A.M., my leg bones, my back bones, my nikkyoed and sankyoed wrist bones. Various egg sized muscle lumps appeared and disappeared on my body, each hindering a new and different range of motion.

By September I’d stopped bruising. I stopped aching too. I think my body gave it up in order to conserve energy. In fact, the thing I learned during those early months was how

to conserve energy, although at the time I didn't feel myself learning it. In order to conserve energy I became extremely efficient.

I did what I could in the hours I had. I was never bored. I woke up, meditated, practiced, got Alonza clean, dressed, fed, packed for school, studied the spelling list in the car, went to work, came home, did the dojo routine, picked up the kid, settled her in, did my suburi, practiced, read to the kid and put her to bed and worked some more. Those things were mandatory. Whenever possible I squeezed in a shower and a walk and a trip to the grocery store. Sometimes I read the headlines of the newspaper or had a glorious half-hour nap.

Everything else slipped through the cracks. A friend or a sister would call, and I'd say I'd call back, and the note would sit on my desk for weeks. I napped at stoplights and at the movies and at dinner parties. Twice I took Alonza to school and found that it was a school holiday. Bills sat on my desk for what I thought was a week or so, until someone told me they'd tried to call my home number and it had been disconnected.

And I learned to let those things go and be happy. My body was getting strong. I was getting along fine on less than five hours of sleep. I was starting to know which way to blend for kote gaeshi and which way to blend for irimi nage. My daughter was happy and healthy and she was learning to spell well enough.

Then, right at the end of my gig, I learned something else. The following story is both true and symbolic, and it is not the whole story, but it will do.



On a Sunday night after BAMB practice I was working bleakly in the dark while Alonza slept, and I heard scratching on the door to the mat room. I went immediately to open the door, to let in the poor hamster who must have escaped and been stranded in the mat room and who surely was now tired and terrified. I opened the door and a decent-sized rat scurried over my feet and under the counter. It was near midnight and this was not something I could deal with. I followed the rat around for a bit as it noisily and presumptuously surveyed the dojo. I almost trapped it in the garbage. But then it was very late and I decided to let it go. I emptied the garbage and put the food up high, left the door to the mat room open and told the rat to go away.

The next morning it was still there. I really meant to go pick up a live trap so we could catch it and release it humanely. I told Pad that I thought it was an innocent woodland creature who had found its way into the dojo. That night it was still there. I made sure the door to our room was closed before going to bed. I checked in on

Misty, the very pregnant mouse, wondering if I would get to call Alonza in the morning at her dad's house with the much-anticipated joyous news.



At 4:00 A.M. I woke up to a godawful screaming. It was the hamsters. In mortal terror. The rat had opened the latch to their cage and was attacking them. I leapt up cursing and yelling, chased the rat out and into the kitchen where it turned on me and bared its teeth for a second before it scampered behind the hot water heater. I ran back to the hamsters, who were both frozen and shaking and bleeding from bites. Then I remembered the mouse. The cage lid was askew. Misty's body was still warm. Her belly had been ripped open.

Somehow I cleaned up, tried to drink some tea, paced around, sent email to Ted, practiced like a zombie with Darrin and Kathy, then called Alonza's dad to say I was coming over. Telling Alonza the news was about as an adult a situation as I ever care to be in again.

The next day the rat disappeared. But nonetheless, I sprang into action. I reprioritized. I needed to take care of some things. Alonza stayed home and we buried Misty and secured the hamster cage and bought some rat traps. Not the live kind.

Then I went through my heap of bills, had a long talk with my sister and had my brakes fixed. And other things that were wrong, I started taking action.

Two weeks later, Dot the hamster seemed to be recovering from her rat bite abscesses. But Midnight was ailing and we came home that Sunday night to find her stiff and dead. The next morning, after practice, I was behind the counter, on a conference call, when I opened the mat door. The rat had been waiting. It ran across my feet and behind the refrigerator. You bastard, I told it. You can't do that.

With the phone on my shoulder I baited the two big rat traps with peanut butter and raisins and put one on each side of the fridge and listened. The rat was scuffling and sneaking. When my call was over I checked the traps. The bait was half gone and there were little peanut butter footprints around them. I rebaited them and carefully carefully set the trigger right on the edge.

A minute later I heard the snap, and just one flip flop. It took all my courage to check. The rat had been poking its little snout into the food without stepping on the trap. The snapper had landed smack on its skull, and the carnage was dreadful. I'm sorry, you bastard, I said. You deserved that.

And I cleaned it up. And I went back to doing what needed to be done.

IWAMA JOURNAL

I was looking over my Iwama journal from 1997. Memories of the trip are still rich and vivid, like the overly saturated colors of a home video. In my mind the Iwama dojo pulses with energy and fascination, unexpected smells, strange behavior, odd dialects and odder personalities. Minor discomforts and confusion, made more than worthwhile by a culturally and technically remarkable experience. I hold that trip to Japan in a revered place. It hangs out along with things like achieving independence, finding my creative voice, falling in love. My most valued life experiences. But the journal doesn't read that way at all. Here's my first entry:

up 5:15 a.m.

clean up grounds

b'fast: nasty white toast, tasteless peanut butter, sickly sweet jam; leftovers from dinner.

Salvation: Peet's coffee.

- -10 a.m. keiko:

tai no henko

morote dore koku ho

irime nage

shomen uchi ikkyo

shomen uchi nikkyo

shomen uchi sankyo

yokomen uchi kote gaeshi

yokomen uchi shiho nage.

Not so exotic. In fact, it could be the same class on any given night on the mat in Oakland. And that's what got me thinking. Training was intensified in Japan. Made special. I wrote a poem that day:

*gray humid morning
training under saito's eye.
my name's not da-me.*

So, I wonder, where's the poetry about training at home. Where's the intensity, the verve and fascination that made every one of Saito's moves momentous. I looked. And I see our Senseis are a direct connection to Saito, to O'Sensei. There's a piece of Iwama in each breath, in every gesture. Each sempei and every student is equally connected to the source. To open my heart to the sacred stuff that permeates every day activity, is to spend every moment on the mat, really, every moment of awareness, as vibrant and clear and energized as I was training under the rising sun, with Saito's bamboo forest rustling in the background, and O'Sensei's little house casting it's long shadow over us.

One of the most profound experiences I recall from my trip is the realization that we are taught in Oakland precisely as Aikido is taught in Iwama, save, of course, having to sweep and rearrange those nutty little green plums every morning. And that deserves a poem. So I offer this to the dojo as a statement of appreciation and fondness for the

teaching, the lineage and the spirit that lives eternally as it lives in each of us.

*O'Sensei sees
Aikido and plum blossoms
from Telegraph Ave.*

RICHARD LEVITT



TRIP TO JAPAN

Part I Getting There

One crystal clear California summer night, during the Saito Sensei Seminar 2000, several of us were out eating and having fun into the late hours of the night. Don't ask me how I got out into a dark field with a yondan, a sandan and a nidan, but that is what happened. Don't ask me how I got a jo in my hand, but that is what happened. Soon one of them started attacking the other and the one left over asked me to attack him and I started to wonder how I got into this position. But then, I attacked.

Being completely over-matched, I soon decided just to watch. Wow, you should have seen these guys. Aikido materialized into a completely unstructured, unbridled, graceful, frightening, and dynamic martial art right before my eyes. Shomen uchi's turned to jodan gaeshi's that rolled into a whole mish mash of strikes, parries, dodges, and jabs. One of the guys would get hit on the arm and just chuckle and start all over again twice as hard. Another got fancy with a parry and a roll mixed into one and found his opponents' weak spot. They went on with different forms, different weapons and even no weapons.

After a lot of fighting, we all sat down for a rest and one said, "We gotta get ourselves to Iwama." We all agreed and laughed and relaxed. I felt really glad to be with them and a part of their activity, and yet, was merely a spectator. But what I witnessed that night and many of the times I have seen all of my sempai in action, made me think, "That's what I want to do. I want to do that too."

Thereafter, I made plans to go to Iwama. The first meeting had 10-12 people and about 5 people said they were definitely going. We planned on one month. After about a 3 week break, we held a second meeting to which about 4 people showed, but some others just could not make it. I will not go through all of the details, but soon it was two and then it was just one, me. Even Vince Salvatore planned on taking a group of 14 people for two weeks, and that fell through too. People had a hard time getting the time off or coming up with the money or something. It is really difficult to take time out of your life, to pick up and travel

around the world for 2 weeks of training. You have to be completely determined.

The cheapest air tickets I could find were for about \$550 through a website called faresonline.com who almost managed to completely wreck my travel plans. They never delivered the tickets. How in the heck I put up with 3 months of excuses, I do not know. But I was busy doing all kinds of things and did not have time for it. Luckily enough, a friend, who worked for United Airlines, gave me some companion passes the night before I left. I'll talk about the flight over later.

Nonetheless, I prepared to go to Iwama alone and started trying to find some information. Alberta Hankenson Sempai and I went out for dinner and had a great time going through all the details of her Iwama experience. I published part of that lively discussion in a recent Kiai article. Deborah Maizels Sempai and Peter Slote Sempai also spent valuable time with me over dinner and drinks. Each one of them imparted nice kernels of knowledge and experience with me. I was astonished to learn that Saito Sensei once took Deborah and several others on a tour of Japan for a couple days. He rented a van and drove. [**see Editor's note below*] In retrospect, the one thing that Peter Sempai said that sticks in my mind is "find a Sempai and glob onto him/her." I will explain the value in that in another article.

I needed more though, and sought out Leif Branson, Richard Levitt, and Maggie Vashel for advice. I even e-mailed Stan Pranin Sensei and posted many things on his website asking people about their experiences in Iwama. I got Mark Larson's (Saito Sensei's translator) e-mail address and bugged him about etiquette, presents for Sensei and such. Peter Lennon from Rohnert Park had some good advice.

My girlfriend bought me travel books and I found some concerning Japanese travel, culture and etiquette. I grilled every Japanese person I could find to get more information. One time I even asked a sushi chef for advice on etiquette during meals.

No matter how many people I asked, no matter what I read, no matter how many things I tried to find out, no matter how hard I prepared for this trip, I still was completely scared out of my wits. But I was also amped, pumped up to experience a new type of adventure. No one in my family has ever been to Asia. Before this, I had been to Europe for long periods of time, but never to some place as foreign as Japan. The newness of it really kept me going and frightened me.

When I first asked Kim Sensei for a letter of recommendation, he asked, "Why do you want to go to Iwama?"

"To learn more," I replied, "and to see if I like it."

"Iwama is not a place to 'like', but you will learn a lot," he answered.

Statements like that left me perplexed as to what Iwama

really was. Thinking about it, just now, I think all of the Iwama veterans said that same thing, just not so succinctly. Until you go, you will have no idea what that means. I could try to explain it, but only in vain.

Sensei and I didn't discuss much more in that conversation, but he said he would write my letter of recommendation. He wanted to wait until just a month before I would leave to write it.

So I trained 3-5 times a week for a couple of months and then reminded Sensei about the letter of recommendation. He wrote one. Yuko translated it and I mailed it. Then came THE CLASS.

Kim Sensei called me up to be his uke all night that night. Every one of my fellow students trained incredibly vigorously with me. I will just be honest, after the first half hour, I looked up at the clock and I swear it had not moved for 30 minutes. I thought how am I going to make it through this. Everything moved so fast and I got really tired really quickly. Sensei went faster. I lost my breath and didn't know my name and my judo gi was soaked with sweat. My body hit the mat and the chips had to pick me back up. It felt like I was fighting a 12-foot tiger partnered with a 12-foot wave.

There were so many explicable and inexplicable lessons contained in and after that one class. What an incredibly valuable experience I had. It took me a couple of days to get back on the mat, but I did. Then the same thing happened all over again. After that class Sensei said, "In Iwama they will push you and keep pushing." He told me not to give up in the face of adversity and be tough. Around that time, someone sent me an e-mail that said, "If you fall down 5 times, get up 6." With the help of the mat chips, I accomplished just that.

The time to leave came faster than I ever would have imagined. I had "goodbye" dinners and such, and lots of last bits of advice. My friend's companion passes came through and I actually flew business class to Narita. Now that is a nice way to fly. I had about 3-4 pretty Japanese flight attendants waiting on me at all times, great food and a lot to drink. Would you believe they showed the movie "Rocky" on that flight?

If you fly into Narita and plan to go to Iwama, do not bother going into Tokyo. Tokyo is to the east of Narita and Iwama is north of Narita. Tokyo is at least 1.5 hours from Narita. Iwama is about the same. Tokyo is a huge smoggy city where everyone smokes and drives on the left side of the road. I saw one bird in Tokyo. Everyone has cell phones and they are constantly playing games on them. In Japan, you answer the phone by saying "mooshi mooshi," or something like that. So walking down the street or in the subway or bus or wherever, it seems like everyone is walking around saying "mooshi mooshi." Adults read comic books and the teenagers look like Martians. There is no petty crime in Japan and almost everyone sleeps on the train.

It is hard to get around in Japan though. Most of the big signs are repeated in Romanji, but everything else is Japanese. Want a train ticket? Want to exchange money? Want some food? Want a drink? Need directions? Gum? All of the signs for these things are in Japanese.

My good traveling karma came in handy. I was extremely lucky to get anywhere at all. But in Japan, if you need help, people earnestly try to help you. If they don't understand you, try writing it down. Instead of saying, "I need a train to Iwama." Write "Train" and "Tokyo --> Iwama" on a piece of paper, put on a pitiful face and say "sumimasen" and give them the paper. Most Japanese can read English better than speak it. The written words may make sense to them. It works I tell you. I found a clandestine jo shop in a small town the same way.

When I got to the town of Iwama, I just decided to try and find the dojo by feel. Somewhere on the Internet, I had seen a map of Iwama and the location of the dojo. So I walked out of the train station with all of my baggage and managed to get completely lost. After a while, I went into a shop and just said, "sumimasen" (remember that) "Aikido Dojo," and raised my arms like it was a question. The ladies in the shop tried to draw a map for me and I thanked them and left. After about 2 minutes, one of the ladies drove up in her car and had me throw my bags in. She drove me to the dojo. Before I knew it, we took a right onto a narrow muddy road on a wooded lot. Once we came to a small crossroads, she stopped. I took my bags out and laid them in the dirt.

I looked to the right and saw the backside of a house and a tool shed, which I later learned was Saito Sensei's house. Tiled roof one story buildings flanked my left and I met Jonathon Lane, an American from Georgia, right there directly in front of O'Sensei's house. He welcomed me. I said my thanks and goodbyes to the lady and grabbed my bags. Jonathon showed me where I could keep my bags and asked if I brought a present for "Sensei."

"Good, bring it with you now."

JR RICHARDS

[Editor's Note: Re "Saito Sensei once took Deborah and several others on a tour of Japan for a couple days. He rented a van and drove." I, Deborah (editor of the KIAI) feel it necessary to explain that: 1. Sensei owned the van; and 2. It wasn't exactly that Sensei took me and several others on a tour. Actually he was taking Hitohiro-san, Bernice Tom, and 2 others to help him with a seminar that a former student organized in a town somewhere in the north. Sensei noticed me on the day they were leaving and said, "Deborah, do you want to come too?" Of course I said yes.

None of us spoke Japanese well enough to know exactly where we were going or how far away it was. We just climbed in the back of the van and let Sensei take us wherever he wanted.

On the trip I was, as always, struck by Sensei's generosity and his love

of good food. We stopped at a variety of restaurants along the way and Sensei treated all of us to delicacies the likes of which I hope to experience again. And, since we were Sensei's travelling companions, his former student included us at the banquet reserved for the very elite. I ate things raw at that banquet that I wouldn't dare step on barefoot if I saw them on a beach... and then, on the way back to Iwama, Sensei took us to see a famous statue of a goddess holding a fish. ... That was the tour.]



WHAT IS EDUCATION?

What is education? Education involves the transmission of certain skills. In parenting, academics, vocational and trade training, experiential education, sports, the martial arts, any meditative discipline, and life itself, instruction is given and received. From the process of the single cell to our own existence, the same principles frame all life.

Amino acids and proteins interact, instruction is given and received, and cell by cell, life happens. The way that the instruction is given and received constantly changes. Environmental pressures act: after several billion years you could be blue-green algae or an ape or a redwood tree.

The skills that various life forms exhibit result from interactions with the surrounding environment. Plant cells learn to use the sun's energy for food. Certain cells learn to identify "foreign" molecules and attack them. Humans learn to speak through watching, listening to, and imitating those around them.

Humans develop skills in the areas of food, communication, transportation, shelter, combat, medicine, critical thinking, and application of technology in all these areas. These skills are transmitted person to person; that is, most of these skills are not genetic. However, these skills depend on underlying genetic traits, including our brains and thumbs. The skills that we focus on are based upon countless other skills already learned. We truly stand on the shoulders of giants, or protein molecules, or whatever.

In the dojo, some skills we focus on are coordinated body movement and awareness of energy. The principles of connection, extension, and blending are applied in self-defense. Sensei demonstrates, we watch. We practice the movements, get feedback from our partners and teachers, adjust, and practice more. The purpose of the dojo is educational; the focus is on training. A major function of the senior students and uchi deshi is to handle "business" so as to allow Sensei to focus completely on teaching.

In the 6th grade classroom, the purpose is, obviously, also educational. Reading, writing, critical thinking, logic, and public speaking are some skills that are focused on. I give oral, written, and visual instruction, the class practices, and I give feedback. Most public educators and administrators will say public education focuses on academic skills.

However, these academic skills that are the ideal focus of the classroom often fall by the wayside. A lot of attention is given to personal responsibility, teamwork, and conflict resolution so that the classroom community can function properly.

It can be taken as a sign of sickness when an organism focuses on any skill that detracts from its connection to the surrounding environment. Simpler life forms don't have this problem, but we do. The leisure our culture enjoys has its pitfalls. Individuals become increasingly dependent on the infrastructure to deliver food, shelter, and entertainment. Basic survival skills become less important. Mental illness and other imbalances become prevalent.

To define where something ends and where another thing begins leads to paradox. Ultimately there is no difference between form and environment. The interaction is all. I remember Hoa Sensei saying that too many choices causes mental overload. Our culture tells us we can do anything, go anywhere, learn whatever we want: the sky is the limit! Screens must be set up so that we may function properly in our daily lives. Our thoughts very often impede our connection to the environment. The quality of our attention to the transmission of skill determines the quality of the skill itself.

PODRAIC ROHAN

SAME MOUNTAIN—DIFFERENT PATH

My cousin is studying Wu-Shu, a Chinese martial art, and he invited me to watch his demo the other day. In my experience a "demo" is a small event at a dojo attended by a few friends and loved ones. The participants wear white or white and black. The spectators watch in almost total silence. There are no gold medals.

The demo my cousin had invited me to was actually the 9th annual Chinese Martial Arts competition held at the UC Berkeley campus. Admission: \$6. Program: \$3.50. The UC Berkeley basketball court (with bleacher seating) was divided into 8 rings providing space for 8 simultaneous events. The crowd was not silent. The participants wore any color they chose, often in silk, and, in at least one case, off-the-shoulder silk at that.

If you've seen *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, then you have an idea of what was going on during this competition. People were jumping in the air and landing in the "splits". They were jumping in the air and touching their toes before they landed. Lots of legs were being swung higher than their owners' heads and were then being slapped back down.

Individuals participated in various events. They performed in solo routines that were graded on a point system. When the event was over the participants lined up and, based on their scores, were awarded medals (big gold or silver medals that hung on red, white and blue ribbons around their necks).

Such a different atmosphere than the Aikido demos I am used to. I realized how homogenous we Aikidoists must look in our white gis. A spectator can't get too wrapped up in any one individual's fashion statement. As we perform our techniques, only our ukes fly through the air. Nage hardly ever has both feet off the ground at one time, and as for medals... I've never seen an Aikido medal, have you?

But underneath the cosmetic differences between my cousin's art and mine, some things were absolutely the same. Students were diligently learning and perfecting movements passed down to them from teachers who had worked diligently to learn from their teachers. All approached their art and each other with respect. All had found something in their study of the art that had kept them coming back for more.

We share much in common, no matter what martial art we study. We share a love of training and a desire to perfect that which can never be perfect. Because our bodies are the brushes we use to create our art, we know the pain of injury. We know the joy of sweat.

My cousin and I have chosen different paths to get to the top of the same mountain. He wears silk as he climbs, I'm dressed in white and black. At times I use my jo to help me along the way, he swings his large shiny sword to clear a path. I plant my feet in hanmi with each step. He jumps and twists and lands like a cat on the narrow trail.

And then one day, our paths meet. We sit and rest. We talk together: he of his art, I of mine. We can understand each other's journey and know that we have each chosen the path that best suits us. Soon it is time to continue on our separate ways.

One day we may meet at the mountain's top.

DEBORAH MAIZELS

EXCERPT FROM " MIRROR OF THE SPIRIT: THE AIKIDO DOJO"

Aikido is not a religion, for it has no dogma or doctrine, but it is a deeply spiritual practice. The Aikido dojo is a temple of the spirit, both that of the individual human being and the divine spirit that imbues all things in the universe. The Aikido dojo must also maintain the severity and discipline of a community of warriors, for Aikido is budo, the way of the warrior. Aikido is not meant to be an abstract theory of spiritual values, but a practical training that strengthens your courage, your internal serenity, and your ability to relate to others. It is meant to change your mental attitude so that you do not revert to aggression and violence under stress but instead continue to behave in a fashion that prevents or stops conflict. Aikido is meant to give you the courage of your convictions.

MITSUGI SAOTOME SENSEI