

The Seidokan Communicator

Aikido for a Modern Way of Life

Bokken Shugyo

*By Will Damwyk
Victory Dojo*

I woke up this morning contemplating the words "Bokken Shugyo." What is Shugyo? I certainly knew what a Bokken was, recently purchasing one for this event. But Shugyo -- I had heard this word used before, but I still was not fully aware of what it meant. From what I had read or heard, I assumed it simply meant "training". So I looked at this morning's coming event to simply be a practice event for performing Bokken cuts.

Arriving at the Aikido Institute of America, I began mentally preparing myself for what I imagined would be a grueling two hours. As I donned my gi, I quietly wondered how sore I would be at the end of this. I tied my newly earned blue belt around my waist for only the second time and I decided not to think about this for I felt that anticipation and anxiety would not help me. I began to recall what Bruce Lee had written about flow in the process of life:

You can never step in the same water twice, my friend. Like flowing water, life is perpetual movement. There is nothing fixed. Whatever your problems happen to be in the future, remember well that they cannot remain stationary, but must move together with your living spirit. Otherwise, you will drift into artificiality or attempting to solidify the ever-flowing. To avoid that, you must change and be flexible. Remember, the usefulness of a cup is in its emptiness.

With that, I "emptied my cup" and stepped on the mat, Bokken in hand.

"ONE!... TWO!!... THREE!!!..." Joe Crotty Sensei's voice boomed across the mat as more than twenty Bokken swords sliced the air in unison. Here we go. It was 9:20am, and it was going to be a long morning. I'd fallen right back into trying to anticipate the event. How was I going to do this? What were my cuts be like an hour from now? Would I even be able to hold my Bokken above my head at that point? I reminded myself to not think of that. "Focus on the here and now, Will, and flow with it." I reminded myself. As I allowed my sword to drop down, I decided to make the edge of the mirror hanging on the wall facing me my reference point. I needed a visual aid to keep me from drifting around on the mat. I remembered what Sal Hernandez Sensei had said about trying to keep count of the cuts and how difficult it might be. I actually tried to count the number of people on the mat at this point in an effort to do the math

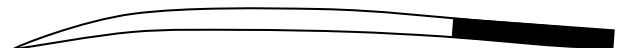
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and see how many times around we'd go before finishing. "EIGHT!... NINE!... TEN!!!!..." Gabriel's voice thundered right next to me with authority. My turn. Forget the math, just do this. "ONE!... TWO!... THREE!..." I began to exclaim as I cut the air with more awareness than I had when someone else was counting. "Why is this", I asked myself. I thought I had been focused the whole time. But my mind had wandered from just "doing the thing", to anticipating the end. Apparently, I was still struggling with letting go. "Two thousand perfect cuts" is what Joe Crotty Sensei had requested. Make each one count...

9:40 am. I looked at the clock again. I struggled not to, but it kept tempting me, hanging there on the wall like Medusa trying to seduce me to look into her eyes and turn me to stone. The upper portion of my left leg was already beginning to feel sore from the constant sliding back and forth. I tried to modify my stance and stride to reduce the soreness, but to no avail. It was to accompany me on this whole journey. I looked in the mirror at little Sheldon as he diligently lifted his sword above his head and lowered it at his imaginary opponent. How difficult it must be for him, I thought, as I wondered how much proportionately heavier the Bokken must be for the small child's frame. "Quit feeling sorry for yourself, Will" I thought. "You'd have to be wielding a ten pound sword to feel the equivalent of what he's going through!". And the counting continued...

As the morning wore on, I began to take notice of more soreness. The big toe of my left foot had begun to burn from the friction on the mat and the tendons in my right arm were making their existence painfully aware to me. Again, I tried to modify the grip on my sword to alleviate the pain, but it would not relent. Time seemed to stand still...



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Joe Crotty Sensei visits Tokyo (again!)

*By Chris Koprowski
Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo*

Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo held its annual aikido weekend seminar in early December, 2005 and was pleased to welcome Joe Crotty Sensei. It was Joe's second visit to Tokyo (the first was in 1997) and he extended his trip to include an excursion to the old capital of Kyoto. Participants included students from the U.S., U.K, Japan, & Australia.

Crotty Sensei reviewed many standard arts and graciously instructed many requested techniques. He often used weapons (jo and bokken) to help demonstrate and illustrate proper movements. From the ushirodori grab he taught us to blend and move forward as if we were walking downhill. This was very effective in keeping nage settled down and moving from one point. In another variation from the ushirodori grab, nage held a jo with both hands. Nage blended by moving his or her hands forward and out towards the end of the jo before stepping forward and completing the throw. This helped to show the direction of the blend and moving in a unified way.

Crotty Sensei also taught variations of katatedori iriminage, ushirokubishime, munetuski kokyunage along with kengi #1, jogi #1, kokyuu dosa, and more! We'd like to thank Joe Crotty Sensei again for making the journey and sharing so much with all of us!

Note to Joe: we're working on a DVD of the weekend and will get a copy to you soon!

Arigato gozaimashita!

Happo Undo

*By Darren Cook
Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo*

Happo-undo, "8-direction exercise", is an aikido exercise to teach your mind to focus totally in one direction then switch your mind (i.e. your ki) to another direction.

Real life requires the same. Give the task at hand all your energy. Once it is done, don't linger. Move on to the next task or event with your whole being. Zen calls it living in the moment. Here is my Saturday.

North: Four hours of work

South: Three hours of aikido

East: Shopping at the supermarket

West: Take bike to be fixed

South-West: Plant potatoes with daughters

North-East: Cook tea

North-West: Eat tea

South-East: Thirty minutes of TV with my family

Not perfect, but I came close to giving each my full attention. I go to bed satisfied. And turn back to face the

North: Sleep with all my might.

Sweet dreams!



Bokken Shugyo (Continued)

"Don't cut the mat!" Joe Crotty Sensei announced. I wondered if someone was dropping their Bokken low enough to hit the mat. "If you look at the mat, that's what you'll cut." Now I understood. Look forward at your imaginary opponent. I recalled what my motorcycle riding instructor had taught me years ago: "Look where you want to go. If you look at the guardrail on the side of the road, you'll end up crashing into the guardrail! Keep your eyes up and forward." Object fixation is something that has caused pain to many a person who succumbed to that inclination. Sort of like me and that damned clock!

10:20am. I couldn't help myself. I had to look. Actually, the fact that we had been doing this for an hour now felt good. I was in much better shape than I thought I'd be. The soreness was ever-present, but it wasn't getting worse. I began to scan the room and observe the others. "How were they holding up?" I wondered. I noticed some had begun breathing more heavily. Other's expressions had changed to a strained frown. Then I noticed Sal Sensei. He was executing the technique in the same controlled, relaxed manner with which he did from the very beginning, not a hint of weariness in his expression. "How does he do it?" I thought. And then I remembered the Principles to Unify Mind and Body: Keep One-Point. Controlled Relaxation. Settle Down. Let Your Ki Flow. How could I forget this? I see it posted in our dojo (Victory Dojo) every week. I began to review these concepts in my mind, and I felt the tenseness in my body fading away. Not completely, but it helped immensely. I pondered why it took me over an hour into practice to become aware of these principals, and this reminded me of how I should keep these principles in mind off the mat as well. So many times during the day at work I find myself tensing up and reacting to situations in an unproductive manner. I meet "force" with "force". If someone attacks my ideas or concepts, I find myself attacking back. This back-and-forth continues, and nothing productive comes out of it. I thought of Bruce Lee's writings again, and what he referred to as the "Law of Harmony" and the "Law of non-interference with nature" in which he wrote

...which teaches a gung fu man to forget about himself and follow his opponent (strength) instead of himself; that he does not move ahead but responds to the fitting influence. The basic idea is to defeat the opponent by yielding to him and using his own strength. That is why a gung fu man never asserts himself against his opponent, and never being in frontal opposition to the direction of his force. When being attacked, he will not resist, but will control the attack by swinging with it. This law illustrates the principals of non-resistance and non-violence which were founded on the idea that the branches of a fir tree snapped under the weight of the snow, while the simple reeds, weaker but more supple, can overcome it. Because he can yield, a man can survive.

It was at this point that I realized that I needed to make a concerted effort to incorporate the teachings of Aikido – step off the line of attack, blend with the attack, lead and control your opponent – into my daily life. If I find myself being "attacked" at work, it would be far more productive for me to "step off the line of attack", acknowledge the other person's opinion, and without surrendering my point of view, "blend" with the attack. Perhaps by showing an understanding of the attacker's point of view, I can harmonize with that person, and together we can find a solution to the problem instead of fighting, as what usually happens. Yes, it is New Year's Eve, and I had drafted my first New Year's resolution...

"Together now!" Joe Crotty Sensei announced. "ONE!!! TWO!!! THREE!!! FOUR!!! FIVE!!! SIX!!! SEVEN!!! EIGHT!!! NINE!!! TEN!!!!!!!" we all thundered in unison, and it was over. 11:00 am exactly. One hour and forty minutes had passed, and we had executed over 2000 cuts. As I lowered my sword to my side, I reflected upon the whole morning, the whole experience, how my body felt, and most importantly, where my thoughts had taken me. I had begun the morning believing that "Shugyo" was simply the act of physical training. But now I am thinking that Shugyo really refers to the continual training of Aikido both mentally and physically, and that only through daily, conscientious practice can we make incorporating the "Aiki" way into our daily lives a habit. With this, we can each do our part in bringing harmony into our lives and the lives of who we share this world with. And what better way to start a new year...



Aikido Seminar Held in Lovell

By Wendy N. Fuller

This article appeared in the local *Lovell Wyoming Paper*

The Lovell Recreation District and Ahsa Aikido held a weekend seminar Friday February 17 and Saturday February 18 at the Lovell High School Wrestling Room. Lovell Rec sponsors weekly classes in Aikido taught by Sensei Ross Fuller. This weekend was one of two annual seminars where students get to learn new techniques, how off their skills, and test for belt advancement.

Aikido is a martial art that focuses on self-defense, and creating harmony between people and with nature. It is sometimes referred to as the Art of Peace because of its emphasis on nonviolent conflict resolution. It is an art that allows the victims of an attack to use the strength of the attacker to protect themselves, and gives children and weaker students an advantage even against a much larger opponent.

Sensei Fuller is affiliated with Ahsa Aikido of Salt Lake, and a member of Seidokan Aikido, the national Aikido organization. Kids of all ages were entertained with games, showed off their abilities in performing aiki taiso or the basic warm up routines, and learned new techniques including a session using wooden swords called bokken. Instructors also demonstrated applications of aiki taiso exercises in self defense techniques; meditation; and use of the sword and staff.

Guest instructors for the seminar were Sensei Audrey Nelson, a fourth degree black belt (Yondan) and twenty seven year veteran instructor and Sensei Michael Miller, a third degree black belt (Sandán) with fifteen years experience in Aikido.

Twelve students ranging in age from five to adult attended the seminar. Students awarded with belt advancement were Vince Garcia, Tina Knosp, Patrick Moen, Aaron Monterde, Dillon Ohman, Sam Woodis, Dalton Nixon, Seth Fuller, Alex Sawaya, Alyssa Schneider, Dillon Schneider and Nick Martinez. Another seminar will be held this summer, however the exact date has not yet been scheduled.



Promotions

Shodan

Marty Duke Aikido Institute of Michigan, Seiwa Dojo	10/16/05
Austin Bingham University of Texas Aikido Club	11/20/05
Aleksandr Rabinovich Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina	1/10/06

Congratulations!

Calendar

- Aiki Ryoho Workshop at AIA** (Aikido Institute of America) Date: May 20 - 21, 2006 Cost: \$25 per session for Seidokan members; \$40 for both days; \$30 per session for Non-Seidokan members; \$50 for both days; Open to the public. Please email Aikitiger1@aol.com for more info.
- Summer Camp 2006** for Seidokan Aikido will be July 6, 7, 8, & 9, 2006. Location: Washington University in St Louis, Missouri. Cost: \$255 By April 29th; \$275 By May 25th; \$295 After May 25th; A \$75 deposit will hold your rate (\$30 non-refundable) **<http://www.aikiway.org/> Click on "2006 Summer Camp"

Remember to Renew Your Seidokan Membership!

Seidokan Aikido Individual Membership Form

Please fill out the information below (preferably in block printing) and return along with your check or money order in the appropriate amount for your yearly dues to: for your yearly dues to:

Aikido Institute of America
8206 Hondo St.
Downey, CA 90242

Please check one <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> New

Name:	Title: Ms.,Miss,Mrs.,Mr. Dr., other?
Street:	City:
State & Zip:	Telephone:
Fax:	E-mail:
Birthday:	Rank & Date Received:
Dojo:	Instructor:
For office use only:	Received by:
Check / Money Order #:	Received date:
Mailings: #1 #2 #3 #4	

Seidokan Aikido Individual / Family Membership Form

This year Seidokan has again instituted family rates. At the top of this form fill in the information for a single individual or the head of the family. Below, fill in the information for additional family members. Use the information box to find your yearly dues.

Please check all that apply:

If this is your first membership year, please give month and year you joined your Seidokan dojo.

Individual Family

Family Plan:

1st Member (any age) \$30.00

Additional adult (age 13 and up) \$15.00 each

Additional child (age 5-12) \$10.00 each

Name:	Birthdate: <input type="text"/> _M <input type="text"/> _F	Current Rank:
Name:	Birthdate: <input type="text"/> _M <input type="text"/> _F	Current Rank:
Name:	Birthdate: <input type="text"/> _M <input type="text"/> _F	Current Rank:
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