

Since we were unable to find anyone to stand as the third member of BOD last autumn (BUT, see below), currently BOD consists of Peter Furtado (chair) and Sarah Whiteley. We are concentrating on ensuring that SF has a stable year, despite various changes of plan which have seen the kangeiko and daienshu both cancelled. Instead, Ito Sensei will be visiting us in July, hopefully to give us a repeat of the whirlwind course we had last June, followed by exams. We will also run a Rhossili gasshuku on the last weekend in August, just as last year; and we are trying to set up a beginners workshop, which is something that has been neglected somewhat of late.

Another soon-to-be vacant post is that of equipment manager, which Marcus Grant has been filling with flair, imagination and efficiency for four years now. He no longer has the time or house space, and would like to hand the job over to someone else.

We are also currently looking at building up a more effective database of supporters and friends, which should allow us to ensure that our mailing reach everyone who might be interested in the events we run.

Another key item on the agenda is 1998, when an international, with the whole of the ISF technical committee including Aoki Sensei, will be held. The venue is not yet determined, but somewhere in France is looking likely. More details soon!

BOD member

Although last November, no-one stood for the vacant seat on BOD, Peter Bougas has volunteered for the post, though he does not want to take it on until June 1997, after his exams are over. So far as we know, there are no alternative candidates; but members should

have the opportunity of standing against him. If any member wishes to do so, s/he should put forward an application in writing to Peter Furtado (13 Jack Straws Lane, Oxford OX3 0DL) by 31 March 1997. Otherwise, we will assume that Peter has been elected unopposed.

Equipment manager

Shintaido Foundation has a vacancy for the exciting role of Equipment Manager. This role has been filled by Marcus Grant for several years now, and Marcus would like slowly to pass it on to someone else, with whom he could work to show what is involved and how he has organized things.

If you are interested, you will need: storage space for several large cardboard boxes and piles of bo/bokuto; access to a large car for bringing equipment to events for sale; the ability to run a separate bank account; enough spare time to allow you to do a certain amount of sourcing, costing and organizing; nascent entrepreneurial flair and marketing ability. It sounds a lot, but it can be fun; it's interesting, and it's an essential function to keep SF operating for the benefit of supporters and other practitioners. If you're at all interested, please have a word with Marcus Grant on 0117 924 1124 or Peter Furtado on 01865 247997.

Shintaido 2000

As you know, the year 2000 has been pinpointed as an occasion for a full international. There has been discussion about the best location for this. Some favour Japan, but this would be prohibitively expensive for many of us in Britain. Others have argued in favour of India. On the other hand many of the American Shintaidoists apparently like the idea of coming to Europe. How about holding it in Britain? Possibly even Greenwich???

This is an ongoing discussion, which is taking place mainly on the Internet. Do you have views? If so, please post them to: shintaido@edobarn.demon.co.uk
Alternatively contact Peter Furtado, or write a letter to this newsletter.
Peter Furtado

Over The Horizon

One day bokuto workshop led by Minagawa sensei - 30th November 1996 - Bristol.
The on-set of Winter and yes, that means bokuto time again. Minagawa sensei led us in two keikos - the morning indoors and the afternoon keiko in the open space of Oldbury Court.

Belinda warmed us up in the morning and united us as a group by getting us to weave in and out saying 'hello' to each other just with our hips, and then our koshi, elbows, knees and toes. We resembled a Latin American dance class, all that was missing was the music!

Masashi asked each of us to say what we wanted from the day: to leave behind a state of confusion ... to be clear ... to cast off winter tiredness and lethargy ... to be focused and directional ... to get in touch with that strong consolidated inner feeling ... to be as far away from London as possible ... to just have a good time. These are just a few of the replies.

Masashi then introduced the theme for the day as 'over the horizon'. He encouraged us to have a far vision and, even in our daily lives of chaos or confusion, to keep looking over the horizon with sharp focus.

In our cutting of shoku, dai-jodan, kiri-komi, kiri o roshi, etc. we were encouraged and reminded to cut a pure clean line, to project our cuts far and forwards in the case of kiri-komi and to concentrate our energy so our dull, blunt wooden swords were as bright and as

polished as metal, as sharp as the finest steel sword.

Nature was kind to us in the afternoon. It didn't rain, it wasn't too boggy under foot and we were rewarded with the most beautiful winter evening sky.

After an active keiko of grand stirring kunitachi, the keiko was concluded with a quiet, tranquil but strong shoku. Our bodies resonated with the nature around us - the winter trees dark and quiet, the cloud formation majestic and there, over the horizon, the palest winter gold of evening sunset.

To finish the day's workshop Masashi shared with us a story that had moved him very much - of a musician who, though suffering from a terminal illness, had continued to express his life experience through his instrument - the 'cello - using music as his voice. When expressing yourself in words sometimes the words can hurt people, but with music you can never do that. Masashi said that the bokuto can be our instrument through which we can offer our life expression, and even at difficult times or when we may feel depressed, we should remember we always have this instrument with which to express ourselves - to communicate without words.

Debbie Evans

'Over the Horizon and Beyond'

Some thoughts following the Bristol Japanese Sword Technique day held on the 30th November

An extract from my diary dated Sunday 1 December 1996 8:54 AM

It's my turn for a lay-in this morning. It's wet and dismal outside. It was lucky that there was sunshine yesterday for the Shintaido 'Over the Horizon Workshop'. We spent the morning at the Greenway Centre and in the afternoon we went over to Oldbury Court. It made a huge difference to how I felt and to my outlook for the future.

It was a very emotional day for most of us - some of us were in tears at times. It's a very powerful feeling running full tilt at each other with swords even though the swords are wooden. About three times in the afternoon I became so exhausted that I couldn't carry on and needed to stop for a while.

At the end of the afternoon, when the sun had set and the last light was fading in the West, Masashi Minagawa took us to the end of the field for a chat. He talked about Shintaido being a performing art and a means of communication through body movement. In a similar way music is a form of communication. Both of these means of communication can get across aspects of oneself for which it is impossible to use words.

He told us of a cellist who was dying of cancer and of the way this man communicated through music. Masashi Minagawa told us of the depths of emotion that this man's music brought to him especially when he was playing his last concert.

When he talked about this a thought came very clearly to me. As a species our success and development above other creatures has to a large extent come about because of our ability to communicate to each other. By using spoken language we have gained the ability to share knowledge and learning. Over a very long time we have ended up putting most of our mental energy into this form of communication and have forgotten about the other means of communication available to us.

There are many other forms of communication available to us. There's visual communication which artists use, there's sound communication which musicians use, and then there's body movement which the various performing artists make use of.

What can happen is that if we ignore these forms of communication then we can end up ignoring the aspects of ourselves which can only be communicated in a particular form. We

can drop into the trap of only considering aspects which can be communicated in the form of words as being 'real'.

This is similar to the more extreme version connected with Science. Pure Scientists have a tendency to only believe those aspects of the Universe which can be explained by Science. All other aspects are written off as not really existing. It's almost as though if you can't explain it then it doesn't exist. Until Chaos theory came along most of the complex beauty of the Universe was just not considered important by the Scientist.

It's understandable that if there isn't a language for communicating something then it's likely to be pushed into the background. And words are such a powerful way of communicating complex ideas. But what are we missing out on? I would suggest that the real deep stuff, the essence of who and what we are is what gets forgotten about, our emotions, our deep links with each other and the universe. These are the things which have been forgotten about. These things which we have forgotten about are hardly unimportant! Our very survival probably depends on reclaiming the life force which lies deep within us.

All the other creatures on this planet are probably living and breathing this inner life force in a much closer way than most of us. Language hasn't beguiled them away from them being at one with their inner life force. To them movement and body language is probably the most widespread and strong means of communication.

So, to regain our forgotten inner selves do we have to give up our spoken language? I think not. What we need to do is reclaim our other methods of communication and put them on an equal footing with spoken language. After all we all started out in life without spoken language - our first means of communication was through our bodies. It is amazing how

adaptable we can be to communicating in different ways as many deaf or blind people have shown. They can often communicate in a full way despite not being able to hear or see.

I don't think that it's a coincidence that the West has become the most powerful force in the World in recent times. The emphasis on spoken communication has reached a level where all other forms of communication have been pushed into insignificance. With the digital revolution it appears that the World's communication problems have been solved where everyone can communicate with everyone else - by using words of course.

So why with all this communication is there a growing sense of personal isolation more than we have ever felt in the past? We've forgotten our other means of communication. Those ways of communication which we used for millions of years before spoken language came on the scene. Those ways of communication which we all knew as a baby. Now more than any other time in our history is the time to reclaim the most basic and important means of communication available to us - through our bodies and our body movement. And one way of rediscovering our ability to communicate through our bodies is through Shintaido.
Peter Newland

The following exchange of ideas about teaching Shintaido to the elderly took place on the internet recently. It was initiated by Pattie Thornley who is currently introducing Shintaido to a class of elderly practitioners, however the ideas seemed to be of universal interest, and so I have reproduced them here.

Shintaido & the elderly:

Pattie Thornley, a Shintaido instructor based in the UK, although not on e-

mail, has asked me to ask if anybody has any advice about teaching Shintaido to elderly people. She has been asked to lead a couple of workshops for newcomers to Shintaido whose ages range from 51 to 91. (Apparently the 91 year old is the fittest of all!)

Since this is new territory for her, Pattie would appreciate any advice from anybody, not necessarily qualified instructors, who has taught this age group before.

Re: Shintaido & the elderly:

Here's some advice for your friend

1. I'd go slowly introducing kumite. The seniors I have taught are not that comfortable touching others.
2. Focus on soft movements, noting that the movements enhance their natural vitality (life force, chi). This in turn will stimulate their bodies' natural healing wisdom.
3. Offer alternatives to each movement. For instance, some people may have arthritis or briticis (sp?), and cannot lift their arms over their head. Affirm that the movement may be done with one arm, or simply with intention. It's the feeling and energy that counts, not the form.
4. Especially at the beginning, keep the class to 1 hour.
5. I always end class with a sitting meditation (in chairs).
6. Actually, I even offer that students can do the movements sitting if they want. (of course, this doesn't work for the breaking out part).
7. Some seniors are unsteady on their feet. So we do warm-up exercises standing in a circle, with a chair next to each person. Then, if we do something like shaking out the leg or foot, the person can hold onto the chair for stability.
8. Have fun! Remember the goal for the class. It's not about perfect form or

endurance, it's about remembering who we really are,
remembering the joy of
life, getting in touch with our highest selves, by loosening up our
physical
bodies and getting in touch with our energy bodies.

Well, that's all I can think of for now. I'll write again if I can think
of anything
else.

PS. As far as keiko material, I do soft warm-ups, introduce
tenshingoso,
maybe some hitori wakame (single person), then meditation (no
renzuku! Ha
Ha!)

From: Kathleen Mulica <katinca@worldnet.att.net>

Re: Shintaido & the elderly:
That was a great advice! I was very impressed.....
From: Ito sensei <EIKOdai@aol.com>

Re: Shintaido & the elderly:
I haven't really taught any elderly people, but have done some
work with not-
so-fit people, and those who aren't ready or able to do Kaiho-kei
keiko.

Basically the Kenko Taiso program and Yoki-kei curriculum gives
you what
you need to work with older people. When working with people
who lack
strength or confidence in their bodies, I remove the "challenge"
component of
Keiko. Just being there and moving is usually enough of a
challenge. In other
words, no hopping or joint-crunching exercises. In general,
movement
should be slow and deliberate.

I attended a workshop with a woman who was working on a
health exercise
program for very old and infirm people. To my surprise, a
central component

of her program was "voicing" vowel sounds, just like Tenshingoso. She claimed that it can be used to reduce pain and stress and build energy. I've been experimenting with it and agree. I like to start people voicing softly without forcing, breathing from their bellies and using the voice to vibrate the insides of their bodies. Usually, given time, the volume will increase naturally. Its a good breathing exercise too -- breathe in through the nose and into the belly, exhale with voice. You can do Aozora-taiso with just voice and as the energy builds, add in the body movement.

I think many of the components of Taimyo I and II would be very good with older people, too.

Hope the class goes well!

From: Faith Ingulsrud <Faithling@aol.com>