

ON LEARNING

Notes from the Brighton workshop, 21-23 March 1997

by Belinda French

Shintaido often feels terrifying to me; sometimes it triggers memories of violence in my past, and sometimes it makes me painfully aware of how self-critical I am. A whole weekend of it often feels unbearable!

But the learning I get from it, on how to move out of this victim behaviour, keeps me deciding to 'step in' again and again, and notice the good that comes from it. Sometimes I get to notice how incredibly brave I am just for doing it at all, I think this is a powerful thing, particularly for women.

Anyway, back to my journey home; I ended up with 3 hours in Hyde Park waiting for my coach, rather overloaded with bags and bo, and finding myself drawn to Speaker's Corner.

There were small circles of people with waving arms arguing about the virtues of their particular religion, etc.; and one very massive circle of (mainly) men all cheering around a man on a step ladder extolling the virtues of enforcing violent sex onto women, saying

"I know what women want!"

and miming violent pumping actions.

I remembered something I learnt from Tony in the final keiko, that in my kumite I give my partners too much room to express themselves; and from Masashi "Don't hesitate"! I stepped into the middle of this mob of men and said

"Rubbish! you don't know anything about women if that's what you think".

We got into an amusing exchange where I decided what I wanted to receive and what I wanted to squash flat. He said some things which were vaguely human, and I asked him to expand and said where I agreed. I added my own stories and moved right in to stop the hurtful rubbish.

I invited other men to step in with their comments (there were 40-50 surrounding), and to my surprise some were getting behind me. Others were making quiet agreements with the leader, and I asked them to speak clearly so that I could hear (just like an 'attack' in kumite, you can only do something big and open with it if it's expressed clearly).

I asked them (while holding onto my bo) to step in one by one to show themselves. Only those who agreed with me stepped in, and the argument of the aggressive man became weakened, he also became softer.

I smiled at him and bowed (in my mind) and thanked him for the argument, and that I was now going to Bristol. He smiled back and he looked human, and he said he only wanted peace and love in the world!

He asked why I was smiling and I said
“I’m pleased with myself”
and I am for being willing to take a risk, to make mistakes, and to learn from them.

I bumped into Pattie later, grounded waiting for her train, and told her about it. She said that I could have changed at least one man’s attitude to women forever. I feel I did, perhaps many more!

During the workshop we did some very wonderful and free shinjo dai kumite which brings out more of the instinctual, using the right side of the brain. It was like the movements didn’t come from your head but from inside your body. Anytime ‘thinking’ popped up I thought
“What on earth am I doing?”
and found I’d done more than 10 moves without realising it!

It was only on the bus home that I thought
“What on earth have I just done?”
and started shaking.

THE JULY EVENT

Practicing tsuki with Ito sensei at the recent Summer Workshop
By Ula Chambers

I decided to write something about Ito's July event since it made a deep impression on me. However deciding what aspect to write about has proved quite problematic as the keiko itself was varied and the discussion in the evening was like a tree laden with ripe apples (well, its autumn now). So here are my very short and shallow recollections of those things which were most memorable to me.

I must admit that I often find tsuki very frightening and challenging so when it looked like we were being groomed for a morning of tsuki practice my heart grew faint. However the keiko proved fascinating and revealing.

The men folk lined up behind each other with cushions between them like a massive concertina and Ito demonstrated a tsuki directly into the hara of the front person. The energy of the tsuki rippled along the line like a shock-wave, moving everyone in turn 'till, reaching the last person it flew out of the other end. (Did I see it? I don't know but I felt I had).

I was reminded of one of those executive toys - small balls hanging next to each other on rods. When you hit the first ball it transmits its energy to the second which in turn transmits its energy to the third etc. I imagined that this was what I had seen happening - a human physics experiment.

Then it was our turn and I lined up to have a go myself with the human executive toy. My aim was not so true however, and with an encouraging (?) giggle Ito said "Not straight enough", then "No, too much to the right" " Ah! a little better that time" "No, you lost it again!".

At this point it began to dawn on me that maybe I was trying too hard to make it work, wanting to be powerful and proud. Out of all my efforts that morning maybe once only I received a "yes, you got it" and really felt that the experiment had worked - at the precise moment my mind gave up wanting to get it right. Then immediately I lost it.

It seemed if I stopped thinking and wanting, a good tsuki would happen naturally. Being on the receiving end was even more amazing.

Ito said that women should not take the full brunt of the blow, even into a cushion, because of our internal organs. So, I was third person behind Ito with three cushions between me and the oncoming fist. However I was amazed to find that before there was even a visual inkling of movement I felt an energy coming towards me, which went through me even before the fist hit the

cushion Ito was holding up front. I thought I had imagined this but it happened again.

Yet also there were times when I felt an energy start and then dissipate before it reached me, or else I would feel a touch on one side or another without any real strength.

Ito then explained why making a good fist is important and gave us good advice about how to check the fist so that the energy could go through it directly to the target - an incorrect fist, facing slightly up or down for instance will send the energy flying the wrong way.

This keiko set me thinking once more about ki energy in Shintaido, where it comes from and how we use it. It is not just our own energy but universal energy available to everyone and thing. In keiko we can tap into this energy reservoir and use it to develop ourselves or our partner in kumite. Maybe also the energy uses us as a channel for flowing through life?

Indeed the question of ki energy in Shintaido was one of the questions Ito had set us for discussion which led to a very interesting exchange of ideas that evening. The question was: "What do you understand by ki energy in Shintaido?"

Unfortunately, I did not take notes, so what follows is but an incomplete recollection of the discussion at the time.

Ki energy was described as universal energy which human beings and all living things use for living - a universal life force. Ki energy flows through channels or meridians in one's own body and can be increased and decreased by the way we take care of ourselves. If ki energy is blocked we become ill. Ki energy can be made to flow through us once more by clearing the blockages by various means : shiatsu, acupuncture, Tai Chi movement and of course Shintaido among others. Practising Shintaido can increase the level and flow of ki energy in our bodies by opening our chakra. Shintaido also facilitates the exchange of ki energy between practitioners, either one on one, or in a group.

As an aside: I have constantly been amazed at the subtle intuitions which go on between kumite partners. A recent experience of mine had been practicing bo kumite late at night in a field. It was so dark that my partner and I could not see each

other's bo (very dangerous I grant). We were doing a walking yon hon kumibo dai in preparation for exams and had been practicing together a while. Even though I could not see my partner's bo I would often "feel" from which side and at which angle his cut was coming and sometimes even sensed the cut before it started. It had been a strange and beautiful keiko and though we had started tired after several hours of hakama ironing we both felt very "energised" by it. Some of the most worthwhile moments in keiko for me are to do with the giving and receiving of energy through the movement, which somehow adds to the sum of energy available to us all.

Our discussion led to thinking about the philosophy of toate. As I remember toate is the projecting of ki energy by an individual towards another in order to affect their movement or space. We reminisced about Aoki sensei's demonstrations of toate using voice and of kumite experiences with Aoki sensei where a practitioner felt her energy had somehow been altered without being touched, one moment finding the kumite easy and full of energy and suddenly feeling all her energy had been dramatically drained away making it almost impossible to continue. We agreed that Aoki sensei is particularly sensitive and has a great gift in this respect, but that all of us can to a certain extent project our intentions towards other people. One man described how an acquaintance of his was able to make people fall over at a distance, and that this was done almost as a "party trick". This was an instance of irresponsible use of a gift to harm people and is very dangerous. Toate and the projection of ki energy in the context of Shintaido is used in the spirit of love and caring, with the aim of making our partners into bigger human beings, extending their universe. Ito told us to be mindful of the way in which we use our energy/powers of projection. Keiko develops this ability in us the more we practice and we must be aware of how we use it.

Another aside: being a christian, this discussion led me to think of prayer. I had always been puzzled by the power of prayer, why religions in general promote prayer and meditation, and does it really work, and if so how? The discussion about toate made a connection for me. Prayer is considered a mental activity, but sometimes if I manage to pray intensely it feels like a physical experience too - there is a sense of connecting with something greater than myself through which I am uplifted. If I pray on behalf of others it is like giving my energy to my partner in kumite. Maybe prayer is a projecting of ki energy back towards the universal energy with a particular intention in mind? If

enough people do it then the movement of ki energy towards a particular intention can actually cause something to happen? I would welcome anyone else's opinions on this.

Many other ideas were raised at this meeting which will have to be the subject of other articles at other times, each of them a rich vein for further thinking and exploration.

One of the other highlights (delights!) of the gasshuku for me was the thorough grounding which we were given in taimyo kata. My first encounter with this kata had been in San Francisco the previous year, a new and totally strange approach to a kata for modern times. Much of it had remained a mystery to me as the recollections of Tony, myself and Simon had all been subtly different. At last Ito was giving us as definitive a version of it as there has been to date . His instructions were very clear and soon I found myself remembering big chunks of the sequence. Freedom from "working it out", allowed me the luxury of noticing the effect the kata was having on me. Again I was surprised and pleased when I could feel the energy coming out of my palm chakra as heat and pressure when I put my palms together over my head and again as they moved slowly down my body in the hugging position (zanshin). Ito described in detail the subtleties of breathing in the kata, inhaling and filling up with ki in some movements and exhaling and getting rid of old energy in others. Most beautiful was Ito's description of the final movement (in odachi zanshin) as the culmination of years of research into the power of the fist from Funakoshi to Aoki sensei - reaching its apotheosis in taimyo kata as an expression of our connection to universal ki.

And so for me the gasshuku came full circle - through the different ways of doing keiko together we had been playing with the universal energy which connects us all.

BODY TO SOUL

Minagawa sensei's Bristol Workshop, May 1997

by Belinda French

A mega day of self-forgiveness!

Shintaido sometimes goes beyond words to describe in English.

After a lot of struggle at the beginning i just found myself somewhere in the middle of 20 people knowing we're all the same. We all want the same kind of openness and love.

With no past, no real differences, not at odds with anyone, with only the remains of those strange landscapes within myself that got carved and knarled to a certain ridgeway due to defending myself. It was a relief to have nothing to defend and to open a bit more.

Then the partner work made me aware of the limits I had set myself. My partner could not see any reason for my old posture. She couldn't see my past, she expected me to open fully. She couldn't see my artificial barriers! I felt like I was splitting open, ki energy burst out of the pain to push me forward (during tenshingoso in fudo-dachi).

It was a "time to heal ourselves" Minagawa sensei said, "a time to strip yourselves of all layers of emotion". this released a wondrous store of energy. I felt I had lots to spare during an eiko-dai circle. I found myself sharing my excess, my hand travelling to meet another soul who needed it. The natural way for humans to be.

Sharing - the only future we have.

ITO'S STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS (PART II)

Shintaido and Passive Resistance

By Ito sensei

At the age of 22, I received some wise words from Egami-sensei as a present for my university graduation. He told me, "From now on, your life is your dojo. Remember that the more you develop your karate in your life, the less chance you will have to use it. And finally, you may reach the level at which you will never use actual technique throughout your life time, if you are lucky. But, if you end up meeting an accident that causes you to use your karate on a practical level, it is your misfortune. At that time, you must be ready to die."

At first, I simply appreciated this message as a kind of warning about my "Short temper" which I used to have in my youth. Later, I started to understand his wish for me, that I could keep improving on what I learned from him, until I accomplished his dream (heiho to shite no karate, or to complete karate as a way of establishing "Peace").

In the Spring of 1996, I discovered a new way to use tenshingoso and eiko when I helped Bill Peterson to die and saw him off. Since then, tenshingoso has become a kind of gyrocompass which gives me guidance in my present life, and eiko has become a kind of magical tool, with which I can create a bridge to "ten" or heaven.

To reach this level of understanding, I visualized an actual opportunity to use eiko would come right after my heart stop beating. Until then, I have to keep practicing, and when the time comes, I thought that I would accomplish Egami-sensei's message in/with my life.

In the first weekend of June, 1996, I was in Koln, Germany to lead a Shintaido weekend seminar organized by Koln Shintaido Group. People came from different regions of Germany: Stuttgart, Regensburg, and Berlin. Some came from France, and England. It was a small Gasshuku (15 people), but it still had a nice international flavor.

When we had Q. & A. session on Saturday night, three of them, Amras & Joey Weber, and Helmut (a friend of theirs from Schnega) asked me a question, which I was not able to answer. Their question: How can Shintaido be used by the people who go to picket lines of public demonstrations? Is it possible to use some Shintaido technique to stop the forcefulness of the police which is used unfairly?

The big question

The following is the background of this question:

Amras saw Shintaido in 1986 in France for first time. She was attending the Annual National Gasshuku of French Shintaido as one of the macrobiotic cooking team. After the event, she came to me and asked if I would come to Berlin, where she was living, if she organized a local workshop. Not expecting too much, I gave my conditions which she had to meet before I would agree to come.*1

She surprised me six months later; sending me a letter and asking me to come to Berlin since she enrolled enough people through her macrobiotic cooking class. Since then, she has organized three workshops in Berlin, and two workshops in Schnega, inviting me as a guest instructor.

In 1992, Amras & Joey bought an old farmhouse in Schnega, a small town located in the middle of triangle area of Berlin, Hamburg and Hannover, and relocated there. They also started a local Shintaido class in conjunction with her macrobiotic cooking class.

The Wendland region is known for the Anti Nuclear Power Movement since 1976 when the German government started to build an atomic waste deposit near the village of Gorleben. Since then the movement in this region got more and more established to a broad movement among all citizens. They had succeeded to avoid high radioactive transport for the over 18 years.

In 1995 the German government forced the first CASTOR transport with 30,000 cops to the deposit area, against the resistance by thousands of activists. The resistance culminated in various sit-ins, blockades and colorful activities.

The second transport was in the Spring of 1996. They became more organized with a picket line, but the police force guarding the train was expanding as a countermeasure. After all the experiences of police violence, anger, fear and helplessness, Amras, Joey and Helmut asked my advice for how to deal with such a situation because they believe that I am a "Master" of Japanese martial arts.

At first, I thought, do I know how to fight back against the police? Are they looking for actual fighting techniques? Secondly, I realized it would take at least a couple of years for them to get trained and become a kind of front line warrior. Thirdly, even if they succeeded in their training, there was no guaranty that they would not hurt themselves. Were they ready to get hurt, or hurt others if necessary? They might succeed in defending themselves temporarily, but sooner or later more police would come back with an even stronger force.....

At this point, I realized I was stumped, so I asked them to give me some time to think about the question. Their question became my new "Kôan". I kept thinking about it, but never came up with a proper answer for them. After one year had passed I returned to Germany again. I was nervous and feeling guilty about going back there to meet the three of them.

On June 16, 1997, I left San Francisco for my four week trip to Europe. My Schedule was:

June 21-22: Waterfall training for Toulouse Shintaido in Mt. Pyrenees

June 28-29: Shintaido workshop in Schnega, Germany

July 05-06: Shintaido/Karate workshop in Bern, Switzerland

July 12-13: British Shintaido Summer Seminar and Examination

On June 26, 1997, I took a flight from Paris to Hamburg, and then took a train from Hamburg to Uelsen. When I saw Amras at the Uelsen station, I told her that I had not come up with an answer yet, but was hoping it would come by the end of the workshop. She said, " I am sure, you will!"

After giving me a couple of hours to rest at her quiet farmhouse in the peaceful country side of Northern Germany, she invited me to a practice session of the local choir group. On the way to the local community center, she asked me if it would be possible to lead a half-hour kenko-taiso session for the members. Of course my answer was "Yes!"

That evening I lead a 40-minute Shintaido session for the members of the local choir group before they practiced their singing. There were about 50 people in the Hall, including Helmut and a few local Shintaido members. After their practice, many of them told me that they felt more power in their singing than usual. Of course I was happy to hear that because I thought they must have experienced "ten ga ichi nyo" or unification of "ten" and self through the effect of Shintaido. I also assumed that they all belonged to one church.

Later, I found out that the choir group did not have any affiliation with one church, but they were organized as part of their expression of the Anti Nuclear Power Movement. They actually had formed a picket line at public demonstrations, and often ended up confronting the police force. I was really astonished. As soon as I started listening to the details of their activity at the picket lines, a moment of "shinkû" or true emptiness arrived in my mind (and body) and I received a great inspiration.

They mainly do two things in the picket line: Sing and apply first aid. But, before they go to a demonstration, together with thousands of other people, each of them writes a letter to the minister of interior. Each letter declares their wishes of Anti Nuclear Power but promises that they will never use their muscle

to fight against the police force and they sign the letters with their own names and addresses.

Often, in an actual picket line, some individuals may attract/invite the police to respond to them with violence, so it is very important for people who are protesting not to do this. It is not so easy to behave in a peaceful manner, unless you erase all anger in your mind. The point becomes how much peace can you keep in yourself, when you are in an unreasonable and unfair situation.

According to their experience, the more they remained quiet, and sang quiet songs, the more they created a positive effect in the picket line. They calmed people at the demonstration as well as the police. This let the police use more time and energy to remove people from the front line.*2 This is a great example of "Passive Resistance".*3 When I heard their explanation, something clicked in my mind, and I realized that I had found the answer that I had been looking for the last year. I decided to teach Shintaido to the people who go to the picket lines just like I teach to health caregivers*4 Shintaido will not help them fight with the police, but help them prepare their minds to face them. The POINT is that it is not your arm and muscle but your mind control that protects you, and ends up saving you and your friends. The goal of our practice should be to find and keep "perfect peace" in our mind.

I have practiced Shintaido for the last 33 years after four years of karate training, which I started at the age of 18. Now I know how to fight, with or without using weapons. My way of teaching fighting techniques has become more mature so I can help many students develop their fighting ability much faster. However, I also reached a new level of understanding: The more effort I put into developing martial arts for myself and my students, the more I create a space that invites people to use their martial art knowledge in a broader application.

I have to confess that my love and passion for my research and development of strong fighting art has reached an end. I recognize that I have been practicing martial arts all these years, without peace in my mind. Thirty seven years I spent. What a long way I had to come to understand my original weak point. I wonder, was there any other way for me to find peace in my mind?

Egami-sensei's message came to my mind once again. On one hand, I was very happy and encouraged by the answer I found for Amras, Joey and Helmut. On the other, I was sad, and discouraged, because I suddenly felt that all of my focus on studying and developing my fighting form throughout my life was now useless.

The weekend workshop which was organized by Amras, Joey and Helmut went well. Thirty people were there. We had two classes on Saturday, and one class on Sunday, and had nice weather, too. The same people who I saw one year ago came back. At the end of the workshop, sharing my answer for the question posed one year ago, I told them that "Shintaido will not help them fight with the police, but help them prepare their minds to face them. The POINT is that it is not your arm and muscle but your mind control that protects you, and ends up saving you and your friends. The goal of our practice should be to find and keep perfect peace in our mind." I explained that the same people who gave me the question, gave me a chance to find an answer.

On July 13, at the end of British Shintaido Summer Seminar and Examination, I shared my latest thought on martial arts. The people who especially appreciated my growth in this sense were Marcus Grant & Vicky Meadows. They said Shintaido and environmental movements are the foundation of their relationship. They met each other 16 years ago, when Jennifer Peringer*5 was offering Shintaido sessions at London meeting of the Anti Nuclear Power. All of sudden, I became very close to three of them, and thanked them for running ahead of me.

Peace activist discussions

On August 17, 1997, I had an opportunity to discuss this issue (Shintaido's involvement to the environmental movement in Germany) with two peace activists and one scholar: Kaz Tanahashi, Alan Senauke and Linda Hess in Berkeley, California.

Kaz is an artist, poet, writer, translator and calligrapher. Readers of Body Dialogue may remember Shintaido's participation in the "Circle of the World" at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993, and "Circle of All Nations" for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of United Nation in San Francisco in 1995. Kaz is the one who developed the original idea and gave us direction at both performances.

Alan is a musician friend of Henry Kaiser, a priest of Berkeley Zen Center, and director of Buddhist Peace Fellowship*6. He often visits the refugee camps near the border of Thailand and Burma, and provides them medical with aid.

Linda Hess is a specialist on Hindi literature and Hinduism. She has taught in universities including Stanford University and U.C. Davis. Her publications include *Bijak of Kabir*.

When I shared my latest thought about the effect of my martial arts and its new goal, they gave me some feedback.

1) They think that martial art training still has a lot of value for people who go to the "front line".

As long as you have patience, you can control your anger. Besides anger, the other emotion you must handle in this kind of situation is your fear. It is anger with fear that invites violence. The violence which comes from the combined combination of anger and fear is very scary. It can get out of control.

Here is the analysis: If you are trained in martial arts and know how to defend yourself, you have choices. For instance, you can fight back if you really wish, but you may choose not to on purpose. When you have choices in your mind, you feel free. If you are free in your mind, you end up having confidence. Once you start having confidence in yourself, it appears naturally automatically in your actions.

The difference is; that if your mind is between anger and fear, any people who confront you, the police in this case, end up playing with your emotion. But if they find "confidence" in your posture/action, they will respond with "respect."

Therefore, if practicing the fighting form of Shintaido can help people control "anger and fear" and develop "confidence", it still provides a positive and useful effect to those who go to public demonstrations. The harder you train in Shintaido technique, the calmer and steadier you will be able to keep yourself in an actual situation.

2) In the activity called Passive Resistance, your aim/goal does not have to be to win the battle on the day of the demonstration. In fact, you should not want to kill any of the police men who represent the opposing principles. The point is how to win your

situation. You must have a long range plan or "kokyu". It is okay to lose the battle in the picket line.

Plan to lose the battle, but as slowly as possible. Ideally, nobody should get hurt. In a way, it is like pulling out your troops from a battle field you may lose so you do not lose too many soldiers. To contribute to this kind of protest movement, Shintaido's way is to use your power of concentration and clear consciousness, which Shintaido students usually develop through their daily practice.

Another day you may get to speak out about the situation. You may have a chance to write an article and put it in the newspaper, or get an interview by TV, Radio, or Magazine. You can send your letter of appeal to politicians. These kind of activities are also tactics in the quiet battle.

Shintaido can help you be cool and passive when facing the police, but help you be hot and active when you do other activities. In this way, sooner or later you will meet with "ten no toki, chi no ri, hito no wa" or heavenly timing, benefit of the earth, harmony of human, and finally you will find new directions for what was once a problem, and find the problem itself has disappeared.

At last, I would like to express my special appreciation to Amras, Joey and Helmut for providing me an opportunity to up-grade the level of my Shintaido wisdom. Also, I thank Kaz, Alan and Linda for their encouragement to my work and their suggestion to the Wendland Anti Nuclear Power Movement.

Foot notes

1. The conditions were;
 - 1) Get minimum 12 people, maximum 24 in the class.
 - 2) Guarantee to the travel cost between Paris and Berlin.
 - 3) Budget 1/2 of my normal instruction fee, which was US\$1,000.00 for a weekend workshop (12 hour training) at that period.
 - 4) Provide food and accommodation (4 nights) while I am in Berlin.

2. The Wendland Anti Nuclear Power Movement includes many style of protest. Some group of people choose to fight. When

they do that, the police use their power and right to fight back using the same level of violence. For instance, if some people use a stick, the police are allowed to use their stick. If people in picket line throw stones, the police are allowed to shoot tear gas. Once force is used, they do not need to relocate people in the picket line, because the picket line itself will move. Since the police are trained for this kind of action, it takes, in a way, less time and energy for them to clean the field than to relocate people doing passive resistance from one place to the other.

3. "This use of non-violent conflict as a means of attaining social change is not merely passive or non-violent resistance. By refusing to cooperate with violence and injustice through the use of violent and unjust means, it is the creation of the positive transformative energy Gandhi called 'satyagraha' or 'truth force.' As Gandhi said, the aim is to transform conflict rather than to suppress it or explode it into violence." -from "The Chalice and the Blade" by Riane Eisler-

4. In 1995, I designed a stress reduction program for the Hospice by the Bay in San Francisco and started leading Shintaido Meditation workshops for the hospice caregivers. These workshops are intended to help the caregivers recover from the death of their clients. In 1997, I was invited to the California State Hospice Conference in Burbank, California, and the National Hospice Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, at which he presented a Shintaido meditation process for the caregivers to use in their work.

5. Jennifer, Vicky and Marcus were involved in an anti-nuclear street band that played at demonstrations as a way of giving demonstrators a positive and non-violent focus for their protests - in the form of songs and dance. Jennifer used to do Shintaido workshops for the band as a part of their process for developing the spirit of the group. The band was called the Fallout Marching Band and they played at over 200 demonstrations and direct actions in the UK and Europe from 1981-1984.

6. Buddhist Peace Fellowship is an ecumenical organization of socially engaged Buddhists, involved in mindful non-violent peace and reconciliation work, social service in the streets, international aid, and conflict resolution. BPF is steadily developing a Buddhist understanding of the social forces that directly shape our societies and lives.
Ito sensei

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BRANCH REPORTS

BRIGHTON

by Peter Bougas

The Brighton Shintaido Group still meet on Friday evenings at the Brighton Hove 6th Form College (BHASVIC) details under weekly listing. It's an AI class led by Tony Hammick. All AIs are welcome. There are the usual regulars, and occasionally we have a surprise when somebody drops in to practice. Do come and surprise us if you want to!

We went to practice outside over the summer months from June to August. This was in Preston Park near Tony's home. Generally we worked on jo techniques, kata and kumite, when the weather permitted. This summer was precarious, and there were times when it rained, and that was the end of practice before it started! Also, many of us were on holiday at different times during the summer, and this had an impact on the class.

We have returned to practice at BHASVIC now, as the evenings are drawing in, getting colder & darker and making practice more difficult. The new theme for this autumn is bokuto practice, in preparation (possibly) for the kangeiko. We are studying certain bokuto techniques in relation to san shin kata, and tai myo. This is all very interesting and of course exhausting!

Although I did not personally attend Ito's event in July, I heard that it had a strong effect on those who participated. On the whole it sounded as if it was a dynamic weekend. Congratulations to those who passed exams. Let's hope the kangeiko might provide us with the opportunity to meet up and practice together, whether in person or by long distance!

I hope to see everybody soon.

Letters

SHINTAIDO FOR CAREGIVERS

by Stephen Billias

H. F. Ito, Master Instructor of Shintaido, and Connie Borden, Executive Director of Hospice by the Bay, have been giving workshops for the past several years to hospice audiences, both caregivers and patients. They are also presenting Shintaido at

hospice conferences, demonstrating the movements of tenshingoso and eiko to promote self-care of caregivers and to enhance the environment for the dying.

They advocate the use of body movement to break down cultural, ethnic, and religious barriers and to provide a means to express spirituality. The mind, body, and soul connect through practice of these two kata. As a result, caregivers of all kinds, volunteer, professional, and family, enhance their ability to provide a calm, focused environment for dying patients.

Ito sensei and Connie have gained experience working with caregivers through teaching 10 one-day workshops over the past three years. Twenty-five caregivers attended the presentation at the California State Hospice Conference in March, 1997. Their upcoming presentation is to the National Hospice Organization's 19th Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia on October 17th of this year.

Shintaido is having a positive effect on hospice work,. It's exciting to know and that our practice is being used for the benefit of patients around the country, as caregivers release stress and regain energy.

THE MAGICAL HUMAN CIRCLE

By Belinda French

When we held hands at the end of Wednesday keiko with Debbie, something deeply changed in me.

First I was aware of the energy of the group, strong and golden and calming, and then it was impossible to be an individual. Then I had an incredible sense of relief, it was like we were all the same. I was stripped of fear of judgement. I couldn't tell us apart, man from woman, rich from poor, young from old; all 'difference' had disappeared. We were one heart beating together.

I was full of hope for the world. Some church bells rang in the distance. We became a group of monks in a sacred place in the mountains. It lasted only a minute or so, but that united circle we had made in the middle of the city stays with me when I feel hopeless or lonely. I know we are all worth loving.

It taught me how much human beings need co-operation; a willingness to put aside our differences, to bring the warmth of our hearts and souls together to create a new sustainable way of being.
