

PACIFIC SHINTAIDO



Pacific Shintaido Bulletin

Vol. I • No. 18 • June 11, 2000

Contributions, please

Please send entries to the Pacific Shintaido Bulletin, care of:

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Next issue in September, 2000.

Tomi on Gorei

Tomi Nagai-Rothe writes about receiving and giving gorei, and life and death. See page 1.

Haguro International 2000 Update!

Many people wrote about their experiences at Haguro. See page 3.

Cheryl on Climbing Mount Shasta

See page 2.

Photos and Haiku from Haguro

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Healed by Gorei

by Tomi Nagai-Rothe

On Receiving Gorei

Some days I'm not convinced why going to keiko is a good idea. Then we start and I find myself in a vast domed space like the Pantheon in Rome. The air moves quietly. There is space inside and outside of me, and there is room for change. Sometimes I feel warmer or more grounded. Every once in awhile I can glimpse myself as part of a larger healing process. It's hard to tell whose process it is — just that it is happening all around. Afterward, I can only remember it like a snippet from a dream.

I think receiving gorei is allowing myself to be healed. Or perhaps allowing myself to be a vehicle for healing. And by healing I mean made whole.

When I spent a week in the Nevada desert on a Wilderness Quest, I learned that people have gone in search of visions for thousands of years, always on behalf of their family and community. While I was baking in the desert it was a very practical consideration — I needed the counterbalance of people back home to reel me in.

I am beginning to feel that individual practice, weekly classes, work and family all share the same sacred commitment and responsibility to others. Healing has to be more than a collection of singular events or an act of individual self-determination. In the depths of keiko, and in the deepest part of everyday life, it

seems that the distinction between myself and others (family, students, kumite partners) gets blurry. The focus shifts from individuals to something larger — like a system of streams and tributaries building to a giant, untamed river — an unfathomable expression of compassion.

I cannot prepare myself for being swept away. It is scary and standing in the rising waters is an act of faith (I think any veteran practitioner has spent many moments judging their proximity to the dojo exit door!). To keep going to keiko with an open heart year after year after year feels like a life of faith.

On Giving Gorei

Several years ago I was going through a spiritual crisis and asked Lee Seaman whether my state of mind would negatively impact my students. I was worried that I might hurt them in some way. She responded, "I doubt it. I think your students will be fine." At the time it bothered me that there wouldn't be a more direct connection between student and teacher. I thought, "What is happening between me and my students if not a delicate exchange?" Now I'm beginning to see that my value in class is less as a personality and more as a conduit to invite a larger experience into the room. I can only hope that it will speak to my students needs that day.

As a student, I have gone to keiko in so many conditions — eager, depressed, joyful, apathetic, in shock — and the gorei (regardless who was giving it) was always able to encompass it. I can't find any logical reason why this should be so,

except that the container (i.e. the Pantheon) invoked by the goreisha is resilient enough to handle the general human condition.

I don't for a moment think that instructors have any magical powers. But something is definitely passed down that allows the goreisha to create very particular conditions in time and space — conditions different from most of life outside the dojo. Sometimes it feels like teaching from instructors distant in time and space reaches in to touch the students. At other times, a very small class seems to encompass people not in the room.

For me this year, life outside of keiko has been exceptionally difficult and painful. For a fleeting moment I thought about pulling back from teaching. But I decided to continue giving and receiving gorei because Shintaido has literally kept me alive for the past 12 years. Shintaido gorei has been my path of compassion and community.

On Life and Death

This year I am beginning to glimpse the ebb and flow of life and death through the lens of keiko. Beneath the joyful and uplifting parts of keiko is some deep rhythm of dying and renewal. To tell you the truth, I've always hated the dying part.

Several years ago at his Kangeiko advanced workshop, Ito asked us to punch each other in the stomach (protected by pillows). It seemed like an unnecessarily brutal martial arts activity, and I couldn't really do it until Ito said, "Punch like you are sending healing energy." Later, he reminded me that it is just as important to wield "the sword that gives life" as "the sword that takes life away." It has taken many years but I'm beginning to see that sometimes, in order to create wholeness (healing), I have to let parts of myself die or be cut away. Life is not an endlessly accumulative process — otherwise it would be a cancer.

This ambiguous and incredibly uncomfortable space between life and death is a cold and raging river. Somehow I have faith that my training will allow me to stand in the middle of the rapids without drowning, and that in the pounding and passionate water we may all be transformed. Even wading out into the river becomes a kind of sacred act.

In the end it is a complete mystery. Yet isn't that why we practice?

Cheryl on Mount Shasta

Cheryl Williams writes about her preparations for climbing Mount Shasta with a group of cancer survivors.

I'm in the home stretch of our preparations for sacred pilgrimage to Mt. Shasta. The energy is building and I feel very grateful to be a part of making this pilgrimage a success. I was reminded this morning that success is measured not by outer achievement, but by inner feelings of love, appreciation, learning, insight, touching and being touched on a soul level, and being open to, present and receptive to the Teachings of Mis Misa (feminine mountain spirit) singing her Medicine through for us all. And who knows where my summit will be this year? Last year it was 10,000 feet!

It's been a yearlong journey with eleven relatives, as we call them - five men and six women! Women rule this year for the first time! Weather reports indicate we will be camping on 80" of snow! Our tents will be on top of trees at 7800 feet. Forecasts predict 70's during the day and freezing temperatures at night. Snowshoes are a must to access our planned base camp at Horse Camp. The ascent to the summit will begin at 2 am Monday, June 5 and continue until late afternoon! Prayers for safety are

always welcome! Last weekend, above 9000 feet was icy and 55+ mph winds! And who knows what the conditions will be when we arrive tomorrow.

The reason I choose to do this work is to walk in balance on a respectful, right-relationship, healing heart path with all of creation up to the time of completion. It's more than the physical training. It's the listening, the daily prayers, the awareness of who I am and how we are all connected.

I pulled a few lines from Tomas, our leader on this journey - although he is the best example of 'we are all students and teachers': "We walk together on a healing path seeking to learn from the ancient traditions for survival in the world of today and tomorrow. As pilgrims, we pray and travel together. We seek wisdom in new/old ways of understanding. We honor sacred places, sacred journeys, and the dedication of those who struggle to keep the ancient ways. We seek to know the gifts of the open heart for healing of our lives, our families, our communities, our work places and our Sacred Mother Earth.

Wisdom arising from clear seeing recognizes that we are all connected to one another, that no one stands alone, that what we do makes a difference.

Compassion transforms that vision into motivation to act for the sake of others. If we take care of others, others will take care of us, and "otherness" will itself drop away."

And there you go.

Upcoming Special Events.

Full Moon/Summer Solstice Walk Friday, June 16, 6:30pm

June brings the first summer solstice of the new millennium. This is a time when we are gifted with the most light from the sun, a time of long summer days and long summer evenings. It is a renewal time that prompts us to look at what light we want to bring into our lives, our family, our community and the world.

Please join us for a special summer solstice walk at Tennessee Valley. In the spirit of summer, of youth and regeneration, this event is open to you, your families and friends. We look forward to walking together and sharing a beautiful sunset and exquisite full moon. If you choose, bring a snack and remember a warm jacket! See you there!

Questions? Call Cheryl @ 415-441-3317.

Breathing Workshop

Breath of Life, The Art of Conscious Breathing, a 1-day Workshop, with David Sirgany

Saturday, July 29, 10:00am-4:00pm
World School of Massage and Advanced Healing Arts, 401 32nd Avenue San Francisco.

"Making even a small adjustment in the way we breathe can have a great impact on all aspects of our health; mind, body, emotional, and spiritual." Contact David at 415-731-8229 for more information.

Minagawa Workshop

General Instructor Masashi Minagawa is coming to San Francisco this summer. While he's here, we've asked him to teach a special workshop and offer exams with Ito present. The workshop is set for the weekend of **August 5-6, 2000**. Please see the enclosed brochure. Don't miss this special opportunity to study with one of the five General Instructors of Shintaido in the world!

Meditation Workshop

David Sirgany is planning a meditation workshop, **October 23-27, 6:30am-8:00am** at a San Francisco location to be announced. Contact David at 415-731-8229 for details.

Haguro Impressions

Several people sent me their impressions of the Haguro 2000 International, for an ISF Newsletter report. Here they are:

Jennifer Peringer

The last keiko with Aoki sensei - in nature at last! A skylark singing such a long Coltrane-esque solo as it hovers directly above us that even Aoki sensei can't compete and gives us a minute to gaze up in admiration. The gentle burbling of the distant stream blends with the blood coursing through our veins, as we flow into improvised wakame duets. Then, turning to the dense, deeply rooted immensity of the snow-capped peaks, we honor the stillness of 10-point meditation. A Japanese fly lands on my praying hands and calmly explores them in great detail, me the mountain in his world.

Robin Hathaway

Last Keiko

At last! The Sun warms my eager limbs.

Laughter ricochets around and between concentric circles of soft,

White, pillars sustaining the echo of "Onegai-shimas, Merci, Thank you, Domo arigato."

At last! The Sun warms outstretched arms and the 2000 fingers spread

Wide enough to span that which so often divides...

Diet,

Age,

Gender,

Language,

Ego.

Oh Sun! Remind me again of this Peace

Hovering close

Free as the Skylark.

On the lighter side.....

1. Never, never turn your back to a toddler wielding a shower attachment!

2. A soft-boiled egg and chopsticks...go figure!

Each time I did wakame in Haguro I felt my understanding of it slip further and further away. At one point I felt that the energy flowed not from ocean to seaweed but the reverse. I stayed open to the idea and have been moving a lot of water since then.

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And now the emotional download:

The Haguro International Gasshuku was an ISF public relations nightmare. In Haguro I was introduced to the International Shintaido Federation (ISF) a name I encountered often and came to associate with activities which were "off limits" to me as a junior practitioner. I could accept that keiko with Aoki sensei would be exclusive; a privilege of advanced rank. But when I heard it said that one could be an ISF member by simply paying annual dues then the ISF privilege I perceived troubled me. When myself and others were asked to leave the exam feedback session (posted all week on the schedule of activities) because we were not ISF members I really felt the sting of exclusion. What happened to the "openness" of Shintaido? I wondered. Watching high ranking exams and listening to feedback are invaluable learning opportunities -the very reason why I traveled to Haguro. I felt cheated

and misled. I think the board or whoever was behind the decision to close the meeting missed an opportunity to cultivate openness within the organization.

Rob Kedoin:

In Haguro, I was very impressed by the courage and tenacity of the smallest Shintaido groups. Here are a number of groups who have very little by way of Shintaido resources, and still they practice on their own learning from the occasional visit from various sensei or even from videotapes and books. It made me realize just how much I've taken for granted all the Instructors and Shintaido infrastructure we have in the San Francisco Bay Area. It made me realize how fortunate I am to be practicing Shintaido here.

Derk Richardson

I may have come looking for some great breakthrough. Instead, I experienced a series of small epiphanies.

Keiko 1: Okada emphasizing softness, softness, softness, and the need to carry it over into life. ... Keep the connection with the kumite partner, don't let it break. Don't try too hard!

Keiko 2: Wendy emphasizing that without reaching complete emptiness, complete expression is impossible; experience tenso with all of the body, including the face! the eyes! Reaching upward to the cosmos.

Keiko 3: Oi leading a keiko in which wakame becomes the language of the universe. Wakame from the koshi. Anticipation of the partner's energy.

Keiko 4: Michael Thompson explaining that koshi rotations are especially good to do daily when you're over 50. "I get up every morning, take a vitamin, a Viagra, do koshi rotations, and go back to bed ... by myself."

During the examinations, even from the distance of the upstairs gallery, I could see -- and feel -- Shin's gaze into infinity as he did bojutsu kumite.

I am still pondering the complexity and subtleties of Aoki sensei's keynote speech ... "You are learning something more than I taught.... It is like going to a town I've never been to before and finding I'm surrounded by family... Help people around you to be more alive and realize themselves"... and his characterization of himself as a bulldozer who has cleared the woods for the road, a bulldozer we don't need anymore, a

bulldozer we don't want to turn around and come back through.

I am still puzzled and troubled by the resignation of the Technical Committee and what that means for the future of Shintaido as an international organization, especially because the announcement of the TC's dissolution came not in its own report but in Aoki sensei's subsequent talk. It became even more perplexing in the aftermath of the examinations ... Such a feeling of disappointment, anger, and confusion when we non-ISF members were told to leave the room where exam results and feedback were to be delivered.

Learning from the feedback session had been such a valuable part of Kangeiko in San Francisco, and I had so looked forward to hearing the wisdom shared with the most advanced practitioners. The sudden imposition of exclusivity put a bitter and nasty political spin on what I had been opening myself to as a socially fluid and spiritual experience. It smacked of inner sanctum secret wisdom, which runs diametrically counter to the way Shintaido practice makes the fundamental truth of Eiko Dai and Tenshingoso available in the very first days of practice. Some of the feedback was about how an essential goal of kumite is to make your partner bigger, richer, brighter! How small, poor, and dim I felt that night.

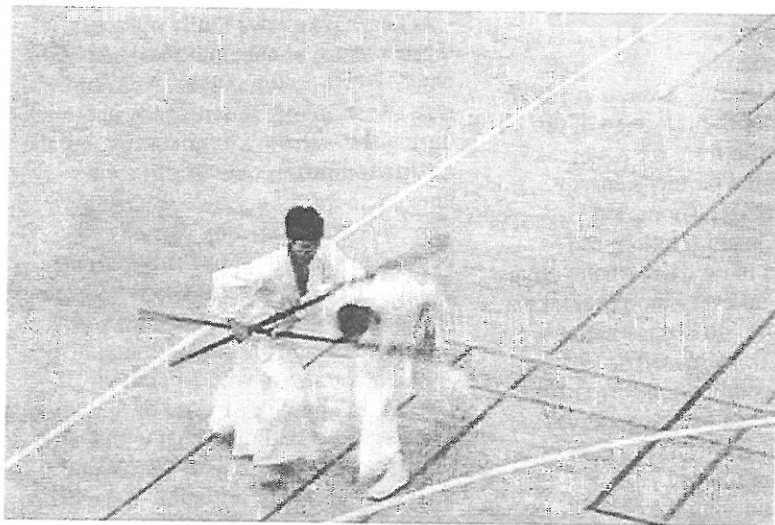
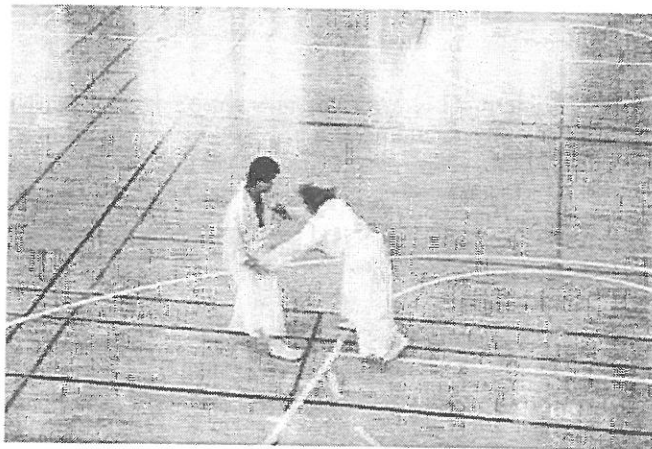
The final keiko. Finally outdoors. What a sense of spaciousness! "Are you okay? Don't do too much," Aoki sensei said to me, gently touching my shoulder, during the warm-up jumping. During the meditation poses, new to me, tears unexpectedly fill my eyes, blurring my gaze, which has already carried me beyond the snow-capped ridges in the distance. The day winds down with... a private conversation in the bath with Aoki sensei -- about scuba diving...

A conversation with Michael DeCampo about the arrival of Shintaido in Australia ... a dinner chat with David Franklin about a life with "too many interests" ... a sake initiation at the hands of Taro and Aoki sensei ... a tap dance kumite with Shin. I don't want to get on the bus that will take me away from Haguro and all my new relationships. ... One sensei climbs aboard the bus to say goodbye, another says, "Maybe we will meet again in some ocean."

Pictures from Haguro

Courtesy Rob Kedoin

The Yamabushi Blows his Conch Shell to Open the Gasshuku



Current Class Schedule

Class	Instructor	Date and Time	Place
Shintaido Meditation, Breathing, and Kata	James Sterling (call Stephen Billias at 415 459-5803)	Sundays 8:30am-10:00am	Marin Academy, Mission and Cottage Streets San Rafael
Shintaido	Tomi Nagai-Rothe (call Tomi at 415 221-0463)	Mondays 6:00pm-7:00pm	George Washington High School 30th and Anza, San Francisco
Tenshingoso Workshop	David Sirgany (contact David at 415 731-8229)	Tuesdays 7:00am-8:30am July 4-August 8. Six-class series, all levels welcome!	Ocean Beach at Lawton Street entrance
Shintaido Bôjutsu	Jennifer Peringer (call Jennifer at 415 586-1177)	Wednesday evenings 6:30pm-8:00pm	St. Mary's Park and Rec Center, 95 Justin Drive, San Francisco
Shintaido	Robert Gaston (call Robert at 415 454-4749)	Tuesdays 5:30pm-6:45pm	Sun Valley School, Fifth Avenue, San Rafael
Shintaido Karate	Shin Aoki (call Shin at 925 284-3318)	Saturdays 8:00am-10:00am	Lake Temescal , Oakland (off Route 24)
Shintaido	Stephen Billias (call Stephen at 415 459-5803)	Saturdays 8:00am – 9:30am	Rincon Valley Community Center, Montecito Blvd., next to Maria Carillo High School, Santa Rosa

Haguro Haiku

Stillness
Breeze rustling arm hairs
Eyes moist
Perspective

Robin Hathaway

a dandelion
is just a dandelion
even in Japan

under the thatched eaves
beneath the knotted kami:
TV antenna

been to Basho's pond:
frogs jumping, water sounding,
as good as ever!

Stephen Billias

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