

PRACTICE ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Martial arts practice is something that is subject to change, depending on time, the four seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter), and in response to the immediate environment.

In the past when there was not yet any electric light in a Dojo (practice place), martial art practices were often performed in the pitch-dark Dojo. Such practice was thus called Yamikeigo (Practice In the Dark).

Inside the completely dark Dojo, an exercise was carried out by listening to the sound of footsteps, the rubbing noise of practice clothes and detection of odors. Moreover, one had to learn to scatter barriers or dried peas on the floor of the Dojo in order to detect whether anyone, friends or enemies, had come in from outside at night.

In this newsletter, I would like to introduce you to the late Mr. Willis Shepard. Although Mr.

Shepard is no longer with us, he will be remembered as one of my best and most fervent martial art colleagues. Mr. Shepard did not once miss a seminar that I gave, be it in the U.S., Japan or London. Wherever I was teaching, he was always there.

Unfortunately, he was taken to another world in an accident. On the day of his funeral, before the burial of his casket, I saw him lying peacefully in his coffin, still wearing the practice robe of the Bujinkan. Now, as I begin to think back about the time that we spent together, wonderful memories well up within me.

In the Los Angeles Tai Kai, I can still vividly remember his tearfully excited face and that smile when Mr. Shepard passed the test for the Godan (The 5th level). That face has since become something that I cannot forget in my life. Therefore, I dedicate this newsletter to him and pray whole-heartedly for his Myofuku (bliss after death). To him let me say "Mr. Willis Shepard, I have introduced you and the pleasant memories you left us to all our friends in the world through the BUJIN Newsletter." Indeed, in my heart, I am moving my pen across the paper while I am talking to him.

Now, before entering the practice floor, it is necessary to be aware of the rules and the



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various decorums in the Dojo. These rules are very different from those of the outdoors and the fighting floor. This series of techniques demonstrates the changing nature of practice and the various disciplines it requires.

So, now let us begin!



Right foot is positioned so that the left knee is placed on the floor and the left hand on the left thigh with the right foot on the floor and the right hand on right knee.

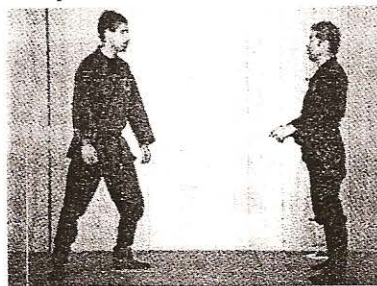


First, bend forward from the waist without bending the spine and place the right hand in a fist on the floor.



Next, place the left hand in a fist on the floor. With both eyes fixed on the rival you are able to observe his body movements. Eyes thus, you can see all your immediate surroundings

Practice is to unceasingly change with the most effective moves, so one must "flow" with the changes at all times. However, while I am describing each skill and technique I will try to explain the significance of the changes. From the kick executed by Chuck Dervenis (Godan) we are able to see one of these "flows" develop.



I present myself to the opponent in a natural posture, ready for any type of attack which he may bring to me.



The right foot kick is a move as fast as a passing train. Without using either hand I dodge the kick in the Surechigai and utilize body inertia to turn and spin the opponent's body.



While throwing the opponent the flow of my body is induced by slanting it in the direction in which he falls, absorbing the falling trend.



In a kneeling posture my bent right foot bending and pinning down his left foot I am able to suppress Chuck's body with an infliction of pain.



Body position and eye movements are maintained so that should other enemies come from another side I am able to respond in defense by sliding out the sword in my hand.



Mr. Ed Sones—a Godan. Before beginning the next technique let us first learn the proper way to hold and change hands with a small knife.



On the front of the hand, turn the small knife held by the right hand and hold the knife in the Gyakute position (lower hand with the tip of the knife pointing downward) with the right hand.



Throw the small knife across the body, from one hand to the other, and give it a half turn before it lands in the other hand



Resume the Gyakute position after the knife lands in the other hand.



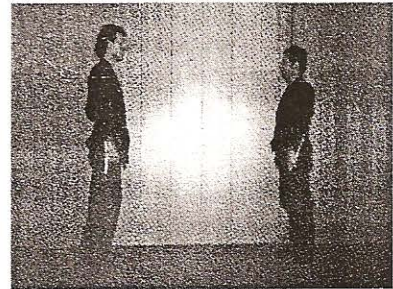
The small knife gripped in the Gyakute position.



In order to turn the tip of the knife back to its original position, grip the handle between thumb and forefinger and flip the knife forward from the Gyakute position.



Point the tip of the knife toward the rival.. Practice these hand changes repeatedly. During practice never use a real knife that might inflict real harm on your practice partner.



Here I face Mr. Larry Jonson of Sweden, my practice partner and opponent in the next technique. Note the small knife I hold and conceal in the Gyakute position



I hold a real knife. YOU must practice with a dummy. Larry opens with a right kick and my body position changes with the speed and direction of force as his right foot passes me.



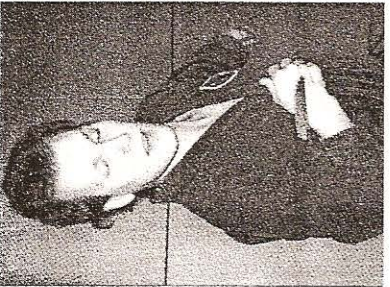
Here my shoulder and body disrupt Larry's attack and I upset his body position. As I do this I place my little musubi knife about one inch behind Larry's back.



As I change my knee position and bend forward, I immediately upset Larry's body balance which results in his falling backwards. As he falls I will take advantage of his fall.



I tip the knife that I have positioned behind his waist as if to support his body. Naturally, as Larry falls the weight of his body momentum will force the knife to stab him.



As Larry strikes the floor, the force of his fall causes the knife to pierce his body. This Ninja stabbing skill lets you choose to stab the opponent or spare him and give him a chance.



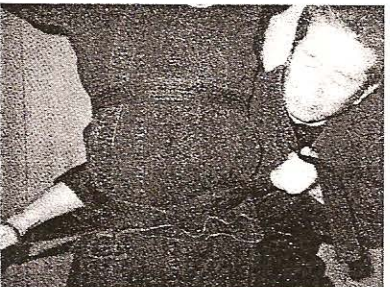
Let me now go over the special way of tying the belt using Mr. Willis Shepard to demonstrate. First place the center of the belt across the upper abdomen.



Then using your right hand, cross the belt in an "X" in the lower back and pass opposite ends around the sides to the front of the body.



This is the position adopted as both ends of the belt are brought around the body to the front.



Next, cross the ends over the lower front abdomen and begin the tie. Please tighten the belt a little as you tie this first half of the knot.



Complete the tying of the belt with the second half of a square knot.



Cinch the square knot tightly and be sure that it is positioned snugly under the lower portion of the abdomen.



These views show the belt tightly placed in the proper position on Mr. Willis Shepard.

The Katana is inserted firmly through both loops of the belt. Placing the Katana in this way, with the tip pointing downward is called the Sageo.

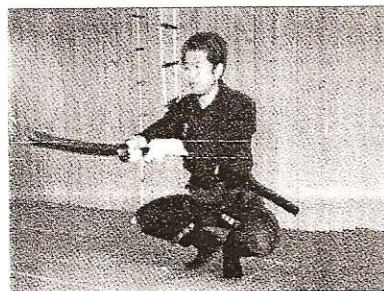




Please pay close attention to the photo above. The Katana is firmly in place and cannot move at all due to proper positioning and tying of the belt using the method of Sageo.



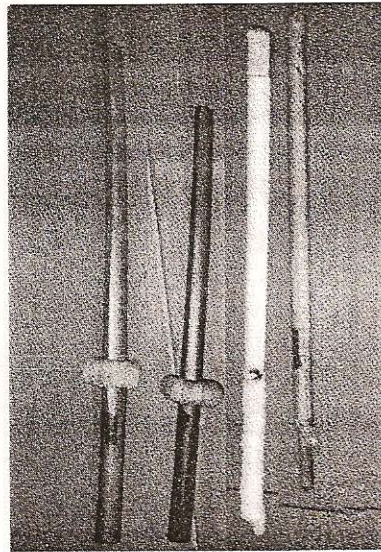
Here am I performing the Hanza Rei. This half sitting position is called the Hanza Rei.



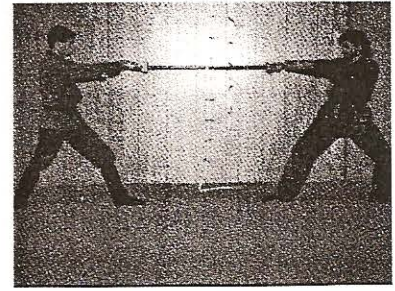
While performing the ceremony of Hanza Rei, a posture of drawing and placing the Katana so that it resembles the Kanji (Chinese character) "Ichi" — one, is achieved.



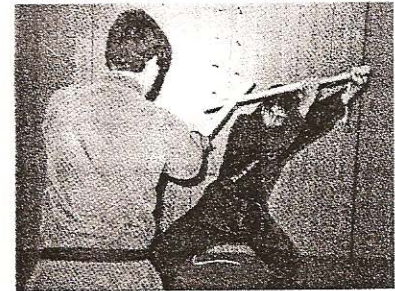
As this posture is assumed, and maintained, one may change the body positioning by rising quickly to a standing position.



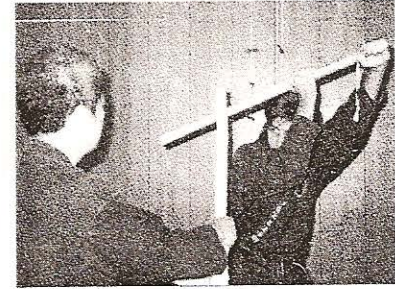
At the time of practice, wooden swords (Boken) that are especially made for the purpose of practice are used. Such swords are made of a soft wood. The sword at left, above, is a large sized wooden sword while the one next to it is a bit shorter. These are the traditional practice swords of the Ninja. Between the bladed portion of the sword and the handle is the part called Tsuba (sword guard) which is ring-shaped and made from rope. Some Tsubas are fashioned from cloth. For safety in practice, Shinai made from split bamboo covered with leather are used in the exchange of blows. Two examples of Shinai are shown at right, above.



Here, both opponents stand face to face with each other with their wooden swords pointing straight to the front. This position is called "Go".

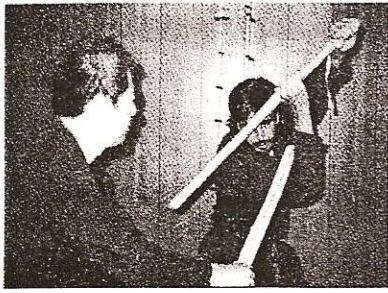


Striking down from Jodan (position over the head) the sword in the Ichi no Kamae (kamae resembles "ichi" Kanji). Opponent defends against the blow with Kasumi Kata skill.



Defending catch shown here is not quite correct. Body movement and orientation, direction of the feet, the state of knee-bending, the stretching direction of the elbows and the orientation of the sword tip are all important, ever-changing, skills which must be practiced time and again.





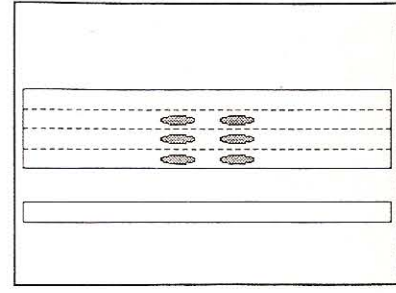
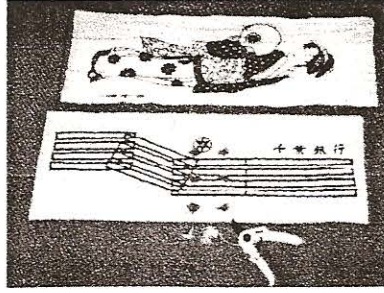
Given a little change, strike down on the forearm. In holding the weapon you must maintain correct body posture, body movement and body balance or suffer a high rate of failure.



With eyes blind-folded by the Tenugui (hand towel) rivals are performing without being able to see anything at all, the Ankokuken (the skill of using a sword efficiently in the dark). There is a trick usually done on the Tenugui to defeat the rival and this involves special preparations shown in the two photos at the right above.



Wayne Róy (Godan) from Australia and Chuck Dervenis (Godan) from Great Britain wonder where the other might be. See! They listen to hear the location of the other.



The Tenugui is shown in the photo at left. At right is a drawing showing how it is to be prepared and folded. Fold the Tenugui length-wise into four equal widths and mark two eye locations in the center of the bottom three widths. Cut out the eye locations marked on the bottom three widths. Fold the Tenugui into a long, narrow strip with the un-cut layer facing outward. In so doing one can thus see the opponent since only a single thin screen is across the eyes.

Well, the thing called "Practice" is, in various forms, thus linked together. One should realize that the discovery in such linkage is not only to remember the postures and the skills but it also is to learn them by heart!

Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi



IN MEMORY OF WILLIS SHEPARD

SECOND FROM THE LEFT IN THE FRONT RANK