

# Sword and Spirit

The eNewsletter of Itten Dojo

June 2017



## — Why Budo? —

**Regardless of the times you live in, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you actually can control:**

- **Building strong relationships in a community of achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

*These are exactly the things membership in a dojo provides.*

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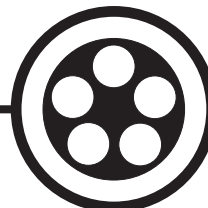
## *Life Hacks from the Martial Arts...*

### Aphorisms Perspectives and Observations

What follow are some random thoughts I first assembled about ten years ago, on a variety of topics related to martial arts training. I've updated a few, based on insights gained since that time, and added some new ones.

- Remember that at no time in history has unarmed combat been the first choice of any warrior. Fighting empty-hand is a last resort.
- If budo in and of itself really had the ability to make someone a good person — as is sometimes claimed — we'd probably be able to find more examples of the fact. Budo can definitely make someone a more capable person, leaving open the ends to which the capabilities might be applied.
- My old karate instructor used to say, "Training once a week is too much; twice a week isn't enough."
- I believe it was Lovret Sensei that said something along the lines of, "I don't mind having to tell a student the same thing more than once. But after the third time I'll begin to suspect the student might be hearing-impaired, intellectually impaired, or purposefully trying to tick me off."
- If I take all the instances in which an instructor has said to me, "Look, all I'm asking is that you spend 15 minutes a day doing this," the time required to accomplish what was asked adds up to about 35 hours daily.
- Everyone is delayed getting to the dojo for class sometimes. I always figured if I could warm up and get a solid 45 minutes of training, it was still worth the trip.

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- Persons joining the dojo with the assertion they intend to make martial arts their “way of life” never last longer than three weeks.
- The most difficult thing for beginning students of aikijutsu to learn seems to be attacking with intent. *Ukemi* (rolls and breakfalls) is easy by comparison.
- White-belts look for ways to make training easier; black-belts look for ways to make it harder.
- When you think about it, there’s a *kata* (form) for almost everything in life. (The Japanese phrase, “*Shikata ga nai*,” usually translated as “It can’t be helped,” or “There’s nothing to be done,” literally means, “There isn’t a kata for this.”)
- Natural ability doesn’t count for all that much in the dojo. Certainly, it helps, but I’ve seen too many instances in which gifted athletes couldn’t make a go of martial arts to think athleticism in itself is any real advantage. Of far greater importance are patience, the ability to recognize and appreciate small victories, and the understanding that frustration is part of training.
- Nobody is too highly ranked to clean the toilet.
- Students that decide they “need to take a break from training” almost never return. Moreover, while there are (very) rare exceptions, people who’ve quit and subsequently do return to training typically quit again, for good, in fairly short order. The moral of the story is, don’t stop for anything.
- When people take pains to tell you that your martial arts organization is “like a family,” they are usually getting ready to ask you for money.
- The dojo is like a laboratory in which you are both the investigator and the experiment itself.
- Women serve the same function in a dojo as control rods in a nuclear reactor: without at least a 25% female presence to moderate the situation, the men can become sufficiently stupid to cause a dojo meltdown.
- Another paraphrase of something Lovret Sensei said: “Through the example of women in the dojo, men can learn to rely on technique rather than muscle, and through the example of men, women can learn to push themselves.”
- My old karate instructor owned a classic, Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith, and it always looked like it had just been detailed. I asked him once how he maintained the vehicle in that condition, given the obvious time requirement (and he was a very busy person). He said that he never set foot in the garage without tending to the Wraith, even if it was just a very minor wipe or touch-up. If everyone, during each visit to the dojo, would just find one little thing to fix, pick up, or clean, the dojo would always be immaculate.
- One of my *sempai* (a fellow student of the same teacher, but more senior in rank) has several favorite sayings, including this: “Do you have one day of your life that you live 365 times each year, or do you live 365 different days each year?”
- Another from Lovret Sensei: “If the beginning (of a technique) is correct, the ending is easy.”
- We don’t regard rank as being all that important. However, we regard the *process* of getting rank to be very important.
- Some of my sensei have been profound examples of what to emulate; others have been models of what to avoid.
- My old karate instructor used to say, “Martial arts aren’t really about fighting. If you just want to be able to fight, go get a stick with a nail in it. Martial arts are about something more.” ☸

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