

# COMBAT & HEALING

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE WORLD TAIJI BOXING ASSOC.**



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# COMBAT & HEALING

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## ABOUT THE COVER

Chief Joseph. Chief of the Nez Percé Indians taken around 1870. Chief Joseph was one of the greatest T'ai Chi masters of all time. He beat ten units of US infantry using cunning until he was captured only 40 miles from the Canadian border and safety. Only the ego of an American General who had to prove that he could capture him would stop his flight. "You have broken all of your promises but one, That you would take our land, I will fight no more forever".

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# AIKIDO

## SEIICHI SUGANO SHIHAN 7TH DAN AIKIDO

By Erle Montaigne

**I**t has been almost 28 years since the first Aikido school started in Australia, how time flies, I was only fifteen and just getting into long hair, bell bottoms, floral shirts and the Beetles.

Shihan Sugano was the first to introduce this flowing, soft style of martial art into this country. He was at the time married to an Australian girl and has heirs here hence his initial involvement in antipodean activities.

Many of the first students have stayed with the art and have an ever increasing bond with Mr Sugano even though he now lives and teaches in New York.

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**if you have muscles like iron then you will die young whereas if they are like sponge then you die old and healthy**

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I was told to expect one of the nice people in the martial arts and I was not disappointed. Shihan Sugano is one of the most unassuming egoless characters that I have met, he actually laughs in the dojo! At one time quite a large muscular person with 'forearms the size of a small tree'. Tony Smibert told me that Sugano Sensei (7th dan) once told him that if you have muscles like iron then you will die young whereas if they are like sponge then you die old and healthy. Mr Sugano has lost much weight since his last visit and his explanation is that now

that he is fifty he has to start to look after himself. Advice I am sure that many of us should take heed of.

Next year (1990) will be the 25th anniversary of Mr Sugano's arrival and beginning teaching in Australia and so there are big things planned for that year for Aiki-Kai Australia, much celebrating and taking of the good elixir I'm sure. I will cover the festivities when it happens, that's my excuse for the taking of some good liquid and food and I'm sticking to it. The following is an interview that I had with this gentleman of the martial arts.

E.Sensei Sugano, welcome back again.

S.Oh, thank you.

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**I think that many of the high ranking teachers tend to be doing their own thing now**

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E.What changes have you in particular seen in Aikido in the techniques and the general way of doing it since the death of O'Sensei. If any.



Sugano Sensei 7th dan

S.I think that many of the high ranking teachers tend to be doing their own thing now.

E.Are you doing your own thing?

S.Ah no, I don't think....Of course all of the teachers have a different way of teaching. I have my own way and so it is probably different to other teachers. I have a very much strong feeling towards the Aikido headquarters so I try to keep to the middle path.

E.Try to keep the peace.

S.Yes...but then again I have more contact with the essence of O'sensei's idea of Aikido as well.

E.Do you still have contact with your classmates from when you were all studying with Ueshiba.

S.Yes, I teach at the New York Aiki-Kai run by my fellow Uchi-Deshi, Yamada Sensei. Yamada Sensei is 8th dan Chairman of the US Aikido Federation and a member of the Superior Council, International Federation. I travel to Europe to visit many of them. We help each other.

E.Do you think that Aikido has been fully formed or evolved by Ueshiba Sensei, or have yourself or others further refined those techniques.

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**I think that in the olden days they say that you shouldn't do only what the master did but rather you support the idea rather than the strict physical**

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S.Aikido is constantly evolving. I think that O'sensei himself was constantly changing so you could

say that he never finished Aikido because it is constantly changing.

E.So, had he been alive today, the art would have still been evolving. So probably your job and that of the other Aikido Sensei is to keep that idea of change going.

S.Yes, I think that in the olden days they say that you shouldn't do only what the master did but rather you support the idea rather than the strict physical. Some people tend to think that he did it so many years ago this way and so I do now what master wanted but what he wanted would have been different today. So we should follow what master desires and not what he did.

E.Do you still follow his written texts.

S.He had some books but never...Aikido is not a fixed concept, you don't follow what he did but some of his ideas have been written down.

E.When you began teaching in Australia almost 25 years ago, you were the first Aikido teacher to come here and probably one of the most highly ranked Japanese senseis to come here. What was the reaction to this new style in such a relatively out of the way place and how has that reaction changed today.

S.Back in 1965 not many people knew about Aikido so it was more difficult for me to establish Aikido. Now Aikido is very well known and I have been to many countries to see the Aikido and to teach and the level here in Australia is not much different to any high level Aikido in most countries. we are very lucky to have many nice students in Australia.

E.What brought you to Australia in the first place.

S.First, I was then married to an Australian girl and so I still have my children still here. So I come out here also to see my family as well as for the training.

E.Having seen other Aikido Sensei, some of them try to perform superhuman feats etc. What are your views on this area of Aikido.

S.Some people try to make the difference between the hard and soft styles and so they use certain tricks to demonstrate this. They have a certain purpose of doing these demonstrations maybe 20 years ago but now is less relevant.

E.So it doesn't have any relevance nowadays?

S.Some people still do it. But now people are much more aware of such aspects of Budo and so there is not much need to demonstrate it in that way. It was a way of showing the difference between using strength or just relaxing when doing it.

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**Some people try to make the difference between the hard and soft styles and so they use certain tricks to demonstrate this. They have a certain purpose of doing these demonstrations maybe 20 years ago but now is less relevant**

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E.So were they tricks to get us to realise the difference?

S.Yes, I think that the main thing was to show the difference between hard and soft. But there is nothing wrong with the demonstrations.

E.Sensei, just a bit about yourself and your own history and what it was like back then etc. Was the training any different to now.

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**In the beginning it was difficult to adjust your understanding from the judo points. Then after many hours of training I begin to understand that there was something else there**

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S.I did judo for quite some time and I saw an advertisement in a magazine in Japan so I went to see Ueshiba Sensei. In the beginning it was difficult to adjust your understanding from the judo points. Then after many hours of training I begin to understand that there was something else there. In the beginning there was only five of us and I don't think that any of us had the idea of becoming teachers, we just wanted to learn. We were all living at the dojo and so we had to get up at six thirty each morning. In that situation you force yourself because you just have to do it.

E.How old were you when you started with Ueshiba Sensei.

S.About twenty years old. In the beginning I was only eighteen but then when I was almost twenty I was taken for the inner practice. (To become an Uchi-Dechi—Literal translation —In House apprentice.)

E.Was Ueshiba's dojo in his house.

S.Yes, in his house.

E.You came straight to Australia from that situation with O'Sensei.

S.Yes.

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**In Aikido, to keep the obligation to the master is the main idea of training and to have strong ties of loyalty with the master**

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E.There is always some in fighting in any style of martial art. How is it with Aikido nowadays. Do you think that this happens because people move further away from the original source and so they start to say that only they have received the original transmission. As in my own martial art, in the early days of the old masters, all of the main styles were in the one federation in China but nowadays it is as hard to bring them together as it is to fly.

S.In Aikido, to keep the obligation to the master is the main idea of training and to have strong ties of loyalty with the master. Aikido is supposed to be harmonious etc, but there are so many individual persons teaching what they think is the right way. The real Aikido master should have some loyalty to the master. They shouldn't cause problems within the organisation. But as ego usually dictates, then some think that their way is the only way.

E.Do you keep in practice the idea that you should take the idea of the master and expand upon that rather than sticking rigidly to what the master used to do. Do you encourage your students to be their own people, their own masters.

S.Rather than teaching them to follow exactly what I do, I just give them the information. There are so many ways to do a certain technique so I tell them to do what they like rather than you have to this particular technique this way. Aikido is understanding change. We have no kata form in Aikido and so we do not have to stay the same. We do not have to exactly step there, and there. Even though I do something one way one day I could then do it differently the next day because conditions change etc. In ten years you will do something differently than you did ten years earlier so you can't fix such ways.

E.Do you often find that when you come out here after some time that you have to tell them that they have done it all wrong etc.

S.No, usually, I don't have to tell them what to do.

E.Have many of the same people stayed with you from the beginning almost 25 years ago.

S.They have come a long way since the beginning, they understand the changes.

E.How are the classes run out here Tony Smibert.

T.Well, it's like, the more senior students follow the master and the middle students follow us and the beginners follow them, so it's everyone following the master indirectly so we never lose the initial idea of Aikido. We have a very high retention rate for people who have made this art their lives.

E.Do you tend to stick with Japanese tradition like some of the other schools or do you stay Australians who take something nice from another culture.

Tony Smibert. They have never told us how we should behave. We are still a very traditional organisation in that we respect him (sensei Sugano) and have a sort of large international family that we are a part of.

E. Some of the schools tend to perform Aikido like some sort of dance and this has led to the idea by many harder styles that Aikido is only for dancing and not for self defence.

S. Each art has their individual quality so we shouldn't try to compromise or compare them. You shouldn't try to bring one martial art into the other, they should be individual and not mixed.

E. So you don't think that it's a good idea for a karate person to be studying aikido as an adjunct to his or her training.

S. No, I don't think so. You can study it individually that's OK but not to mix them. They are two different things. Studying two different things is OK but not to mix them up.

E. I think that many of the other styles would be tempted to take some of the locks and holds from Aikido and use them in their own art.

Tony Smibert. We do have people training who are also training in other arts. Not necessarily because they think that their own art is deficient. Just as a further study. It would be very hard to borrow Aikido techniques, you must use Aikido principles. Occasionally high ranking people come from other arts. In their case, Aikido is an adjunct to a life-study of Budo and there is no sense of compromise. As you might expect they often make the best students.

E. The aspect of qi has been talked about in Aikido and other styles, what are your views on qi development and do you perform any special exercises to gain this so called internal power.

S. Every person is aware that their own inner strength is there, it just doesn't come out. So if you do some kind of exercises I believe that you can bring it out. Generally I do 'misogi' and that is what O'sensei called purification of your body and mind to purify yourself in order that the energy passes through your body freely. The energy is within you and not something extra that you can gain from outside. Aikido teaches you to use what you already have.

E. Some of your own thoughts on Australia and Australians.

S. The people here are much more open mentally and generally much calmer in a way naive.

E. How would the Australians for instance compare with your students in the USA.

S. Aikido in America is so different. Here we have a National body and most are generally the same but in America, the East Coast, the West Coast they are so different. Particularly in New York City. So it is hard to compare the whole of the USA and Australia. In the New York dojo they have much more energy so the movement is much more dynamic. Here the way of training is very open and I think that they could train under some other instructor who is coming. In the New York dojo we have a few different instructors so they are used to different ways of doing things and that is very similar to here. But some other places are very rigid. Someone else comes to teach them and they think that this way is the only way to go.

E. Do you have a special affinity for your Australian school being your first.

S. Well, I was still very young then and I was still studying myself. So many aspects I have taken from Australians. The people here are much nicer compared to Europe. Europeans are much harder.

E. Sensei, thank you very much.

S. Thank you.

### **WORKSHOPS BY ERLE MONTAIGUE 1993: U.S.A. & EUROPE**

**MALTA:** October 21st 1993: **Mario Borg.** "Prana" Triq Ta Sardinja, Tarxien Malta.

**LONDON:** April 23rd & 24: & October 22nd & 23rd

Contact: **Jim Uglow:** 277-890317. Phone.

**FRANCE:** Nantes: 25th & 26th April & 24th & 25th October

Contact: **Georges Saby:** 37 rue de Coulmiers Nantes 44000 France

**NORWAY:** (tentative date): 21st (all day) & 22 (morning) April: & 26th Oct?

Contact: **Kenny Johnson:** Phone: 02-71-34-83

For further information either phone us here in Oz on (Your Oversweas Code) + 61-66-797145. or fax: 797028. Or write to P/O Box 792 Murwillumbah NSW 2484 Australia.

#### **SUMMER CAMP EUROPE:**

A summer camp will be held in Oslo, 4 days, 22nd July through to 25th July 1993. Arrive 21st. All styles welcome.

Contact, either **Kenny Johnson** or **Jim Uglow** above.

#### **U.S.A.**

**MARCH:** 5th. Friday. Afternoon & Evening. New Jersey: **August 27 & 28 Also.**

**MARCH:** 6th. Saturday, all day (five hours working). New Jersey

Contact: **Al Krych,** (908)475-1619 (New Jersey)

#### **CANADA**

**MARCH:** 7th. Sunday, all day (five hours working time) Ottawa

**MARCH:** 8th Monday, Afternoon & Evening. Ottawa: **August 29 & 30 Also**

Contact: **Michael Babin,** (613)739-7805 Ottawa

**NB/ These dates could change slightly and will be fixed 4 months before date.**

**This is due to Airline schedules etc.**

# Erle Montaigne Over Europe

By Eric Press

London

**T**here was a time, way back when Karateka would laugh at the idea of learning taiji for its fighting benefits. Even further back, the hard stylists would not even consider taiji for anything! Then, slowly, some forward thinking karateka began to take up taiji, but still only for its great health and relaxation benefits. People like Sensei *Kanazawa* have been learning and teaching taiji for many years, but still only uses the internal arts as an adjunct to his karate to gain the great health and relaxation benefits. No-one seemed to want to look at the great fighting benefits that could be gained from the so called "supreme ultimate boxing". Why?

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**Erle Montaigne is being asked to give workshops to whole karate groups, not only on the healing and relaxation benefits, they want to know about the self defense area.**

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The reason of course was that no-one ever taught or showed taiji in its true light. The techniques and "way" of fighting that most "masters" showed were considered ludicrous to other "real" martial artists. And rightly so, as what has been pushed forward as being representative of taiji in the past was a joke! He punches and I yield! Or,

he punches and I use my internal energy to throw him away! Or the old standard, I only use enough force to show him that I mean business and then he'll go away! Or the most silly one, we take each posture and practice it for 30 years until it becomes natural! It's any wonder that taiji has been the butt end of jokes when fighting is concerned. No-one ever showed the real taiji fighting, the devastating "Taiji Dim-Mak" or the real "internal" use, making use of the brutal fa-jing or explosive energy to put amazing power into these deadly dim-mak strikes.

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**No-one seemed to want to look at the great fighting benefits that could be gained from the so called "supreme ultimate boxing". Why?**

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Now, the tide is changing with people like Australian, Erle Montaigne, the only Westerner to have been given the degree of Master directly from China, coming out and teaching the real taiji. His videos on the deadly Taiji Dim-Mak, have changed the ideas of many famous karateka as to what taiji is. And now, for the first time, Erle Montaigne is being asked to give workshops to whole karate groups, not only on the healing and relaxation benefits, they want to know about the self defense area.

Some, at these workshops are still a bit dubious as to the effectiveness

of taiji in fighting so Erle asks them to try it on! They soon learn that taiji has something that they want, after experiencing the fa-jing energy behind dim-mak strikes. "I don't ask them just to put their arm out for me to grab, or throw a slow punch, or give me their neck for a carotid sinus KO," Erle explains, "I always tell people to throw their best shot, this is the only way to show them how taiji works, it hurts more when they don't hold back."

But it needs a certain "forward thinking" type of karateka to even get past the first door of even looking at another martial art.

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**Erle Montaigne is being asked to give workshops to whole karate groups, not only on the healing and relaxation benefits, they want to know about the self defense area.**

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People like the Norwegian leader to the Shotokan style, *Steve Bloom*, said that he had been practicing Shotokan for 22 years and never had any reason to look at another martial art. However, now that he is "getting on a bit" he is looking for something to fill the gaps. Taiji fills those needs. Sensei Tomiyama, European leader of Shito-ryu, also is one of the new breed of karateka who is looking at the roots of karate to find out what was left out of the

initial training. It takes a big sensei, to actually be seen attending someone else's workshop. Sensei Tomiyama is not taking from taiji what he wants and then adding it to his karate, he and many of his chief instructors like *Kenny Johnson*, 5th dan & 6 times European champion and twice Open Japan Champion kumite, are learning taiji from scratch as a fighting art. Sensei Tomiyama said that what he was taught is not unlike what Erle Montaigue is now teaching and that karate at an advanced stage does have that 'softer' aspect giving more power and speed.

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**Tomiyama said that what he was taught is not unlike what Erle Montaigue is now teaching and that karate at an advanced stage does have that 'softer' aspect giving more power and speed.**

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Sensei Tomiyama demonstrated one of his highest kata to the people attending Erle's workshop and this kata resembled, in aspect, one of the explosive taiji katas, with loose arms and a 'folded' body feel, not the stand upright stiff way of doing it that most karateka adopt. Con-



Training In Norway

troversial British karateka, *Steve Morris*, once dubbed the "Joe Lewis" of Europe because of his outspoken views and his forward thinking ways of looking at all styles and taking from them what he needs, is also looking at the Erle Montaigue videos about taiji dimmak. Steve has been looking at dimmak and associated aspects for years but now has it all in one set of learning videos. It is forward thinkers like this that will help move karate out of the doldrums that it has somehow come to over the years, mainly because of the purely sports aspects and wanting to win tournaments. Kenny Johnson is six times European champion and holds fifth dan in Shito-ryu. He now slams the sports aspects of karate saying that it is doing damage to real karate, and no-one is arguing, as Kenny is one of the larger karateka who can prove what he says.

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**He tells of a conspiracy back in the early 1900's when many of the great taiji masters of that time came together to work out how to stop others from gaining their secrets.**

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So why has this information about taiji never been brought forward in the past? Some say that it's because the Chinese do not want others to know about their art. Others say that most modern taiji masters simply do not know. I tend to agree with this theory. Erle Montaigue begins his seminars to karateka with a little story about why this misinformation has gathered momentum.



Georges Saby (France) With Bill Barnes (Manchester)

He tells of a conspiracy back in the early 1900's when many of the great taiji masters of that time came together to work out how to stop others from gaining their secrets. Basically, they said "enough is enough, we are no longer going to allow everyone to gain our family jewels". So they devised a means whereby taiji would become what it is today, only a shell of its former greatness, a totally physical exercise with no internal left. They said that they would use the "classics" to teach this wrong information showing that things like yielding and "stick to and not letting go" were only physical but all the while saying that this was the internal way. So when we yield, we move the body, which is simply a physical