



# BODY Dialogue

## Shintaido—Once.

by Danielle Haug

*Danielle Haug practiced Shintaido only once, in a class taught by Gianni Rossi in Northampton, MA. She graduated in May 2001 from Holy Cross, where she majored in philosophy. This paper was written for her philosophy professor Nancy Mardas.*

Shintaido introduced me to myself. It opened me to the ground of my Being, my place in the world. Through the primal movements used in its practice, my body was able to reveal itself to me as fundamentally rooted in the world.

This understanding greatly opposed the strict division I had set up between the world and myself. I had always seen the world as a mere object, some vast outer “thing” to be cut through with determination and will. I pounded my body through the day. Each step was nothing other than a surge of momentum aimed at satisfying some particular desire. There was no need for trust, love, or respect in my movement, only will. But, in charging through the world like a bull, I had

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## My Keiko During the Last Quarter-Century

by Atsushi Funakawa

*As a Senior Instructor of Shintaido in Japan, Atsushi Funakawa founded Keio University Bojutsu Club, and was a Managing Director of the International Shintaido Federation. Presently he is a Managing Partner of Global Impact, Inc, and a visiting professor at the Japan Center of the American Graduate School of International Management. His book Transcultural Management: A New approach for Global Organizations is available on amazon.com.*

### Shintaido Battery

One morning at 8:30 am, right before leaving a hotel room near Tokyo, I started to feel *ki* filling my body as I mentally visualized the workshop program in my mind. I headed for the conference room where twenty participants from seven countries were waiting for the two-day workshop.

They were all managers of a leading Japanese multinational company and were invited by the Japanese headquarters to share their global corporate vision and values.

Participants in my workshops can range from less than ten to three hundred. Besides global management issues, I facilitate workshops focusing upon topics such subjects as managing change, developing leadership, and transforming organizations. This type of situation has encompassed my life for the past decade.

Being Shintaidoists, you can imagine that there are quite a few similarities between these workshops and *gasshuku* (Shintaido retreats). Aoki-sensei once said, “If you have Shintaido experience, whether you continue physical *keiko* or not, you will find an eternal battery within yourself which



*Atsushi Funakawa in 1986*

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From Shoko to Tenso

*I'll know when I get it  
and I'll get it when I know it*

*Life is to prepare Death  
Death to meditate on Life*

*No mind's land is Life's death  
Premeditation*

*No man's land is Death's life  
Practice*

*No mind's man stands at Shoko point  
No man's mind takes off at Tenso stand*

*Shoko stands at Life's point  
Tenso points to Death's stand*

*I can draw no more words*

*Only may I be*

*Bokutoh*

*That draws mysteries*

*'Twixt Earth an' Sky*

by Olivier Jatteau de Kerckhove

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## Quarter-Century

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energizes, invigorates, and stimulates your life." Ten years have passed since I stopped teaching Shintaido and started my career as a management consultant. Now I am able to re-confirm what my "battery" is and I would like to share how the battery has helped me think, learn, and behave in business management.

### Holistic Perceptions

When I was engaged in Shintaido work, I thought business and *keiko* were two different worlds. However, as I started learning about business management, I became attracted by the new paradigm of management. The new paradigm helped me unite my view on business and *keiko* into one. I would like to explain why. Working in the area of organizational management, I have come to realize that there is a fragmentation of people, fields, and perceptions within the worlds of business and academia. This fragmentation occurs and between "hard" (strategy, product development, and finance, etc.) and "soft" (people, team, and culture, etc) individuals. Strategic consultants and financial officers are often categorized as hard, while organization development consultants and human resources managers are labeled as soft.

Few experts can go beyond their boundaries. In addition, for a long time we have been indoctrinated into the old management paradigm that hard (structure and system) can manage soft (culture and people). In other words, hard comes first and soft is secondary. Christopher Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal, renowned management thinkers, use an apt metaphor to convey this old paradigm in perception and named it as "Structure-Process-syndrome." The companies that assumed changing their formal structure (anatomy) would force changes in interpersonal relationships and decision processes (physiology), which in turn would reshape the individual attitudes and actions of managers (psychology,) fell into the organizational trap. Changing structure does not always lead to behavioral change. The new paradigm works through culture which influences individual behavior to achieve a new structure.

We are seeking a similar shift almost everywhere. According to Fritjof Capra, the internationally-known physicist, we are facing a crisis of perception. He advocates the need to shift our perception from the old paradigm (the view of universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks and, correspondingly, the view of the human body as a machine) to the new paradigm (a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than dissociated collection of parts).

For Shintaidoists, this is nothing new. However, management thinkers and business practitioners have been preoccupied by conventional concepts such as "strategic fit" (between resources and opportunities), "generic strategies" (low cost versus differentiation versus focus), and the "strategy hierar-

chy" (goals, strategies, and tactics). Interestingly enough, these conventional concepts are related to a view of society as a competitive struggle for existence, which Capra named as part of the old paradigm inherited from the social Darwinists. If conventional strategic concepts are out, what is in under the new era of business environment in the 21st century? The answer is learning.

### Learning Disciplines

Learning is not just studying. It requires thinking, deciding, doing, and reflecting. All animals can change their behavior because of learning.

Learning is the essence of living with change. It has become more important than ever under today's knowledge-based, highly interdependent, fast-changing society. When it comes to the issue of learning in the business community, we can't dismiss Peter Senge's contributions to organizational learning. In his best-selling book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge articulated the intricacy of organizational learning in corporations. Senge defined learning organizations as places where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly

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*In a dialogue... a group accesses a larger "pool of common meaning," which cannot be accessed individually*

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desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. In short, it is to transform the workplace into a *dojo*. However, it is not easy to do.

I would like to highlight the key principle of learning. That is, the closer causes and effects are in terms of time and/or space, the better we learn. In other words, when the feedback loop which links effects and causes is short and clear, we can learn easily. A baby can learn quickly because s/he can see the consequence of her/his actions. But, one adult person may have more difficulties in learning because s/he lives in an environment where the feedback loops are complicated and hard to identify. And if many adults get together, they create the least learning environment. Thus, instead of identifying root causes of the problem, they try to "fix" the symptom or to find a scapegoat.

On the other hand, in *keiko* the feedback loop is clear. When you are complacent about the situation, your *kumite* partner or *bo* can provide quick feedback with some physical pain. If you don't prepare yourself, you cannot perform *kata* well. Indeed, in *keiko* we are in a learning environment. So how can we learn in organizations where many non-Shintaido practition-

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ers get together? Interestingly enough, as Senge and many other great management thinkers note, that is why we need to develop dialogue. In order to do so, the role of facilitator has become more critical than ever.

### Dialogue and the role of facilitator

David Bohm, a leading quantum theorist, developed a theory and method of “dialogue,” when a group “becomes open to the flow of a larger intelligence.” In a dialogue, Bohm contends, a group accesses a larger “pool of common meaning,” which cannot be accessed individually. I’m sure it does not sound foreign to Shintaido people who practice “body dialogue.” During the last decade, the concept of dialogue has been introduced to business community, and business people started appreciating the value of dialogue. However, the majority of people still believe that they cannot afford to spend time for “such amorphous stuff,” although the truth of matter is that they can’t afford not to practice dialogue in order to test preconceived notions and fixed ideas.

Once again, in a knowledge-based society, whether we can make the IQ and creativity of the team greater than the IQ and creativity of individuals is the key success factor for corporations. Thus, the role of process facilitator, who guides a

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*Learning... requires thinking, deciding, doing, and reflecting. All animals can change their behavior because of learning.*

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team of participants by providing the context of dialogue, is crucial. In order to be an effective process facilitator, you have to develop keen insight on human behavior and psychology. You must also have a clear understanding of organizational management.

With my ten-year experience as a business process facilitator, I can reaffirm my Shintaido experience. It is exactly like a *goreisha* who interacts with practitioners for seeking new frontiers. Participants in business situations are not like those who are willing to trust and follow *goreisha* in *keiko*. They are quite often reluctant, unwilling, and even hostile to the facilitator. You can easily imagine that outside consultants are not always welcomed, especially in the case where it might involve changing their roles, styles, and skillsets. I enjoy working with these “tough” participants learning new value in the field of infinite possibilities. Instead of a *gi*, I wear a suit. Instead of using a *bo*, I use a flipchart, post-it notes, and powerpoint. Instead of *gedan barai*, I interact with participants by inquiring, listening, and analyzing their comments and behavior. Instead of *junan-taiso*, I challenge participants to stretch their cognitive blocks. That is my *keiko* now. And it is still going. ●●●

## HOLISTIC HEALTH



*Ch'i Po, doctor to the mythical Yellow Emperor*

### Seasonal Considerations

by David Sirgany

In response to a Shintaido instructor's request for more information about an ancient Chinese understanding of energy, and how this understanding may be applied to the practice of Shintaido, I have compiled the following notes (from my past studies in Chinese Medicine & Alchemical Meditation under Susan Kaplan). I hope that this may serve to assist any instructor in choosing a curriculum and planning *keiko* events that maximize the natural big flow of energy, and any practitioner in deepening and expanding their personal practice.

Fall time is known as the time of psychic discharge (release)  
 Winter, as the time of psychic strengthening  
 Spring time is known as the time of physical discharge  
 Summer, as the time of physical strengthening  
 You can only strengthen as much as you have discharged in the previous season.

Fall is a ripe time for rituals of releasing old beliefs and for practices such as breathing exercises and concentration practices in preparation for meditation.

Wintertime is the time of deep meditation and inner awareness practices.

Spring is a natural time of physical expression and vocalization. It is said that if the wood element is healthy in an individual, then the expression will be singing. If the wood element is out of balance then the expression will take form in shouting and/or screaming. It should also be noted that Spring is usually a season of much wind, and wind is known to rob your Ki. This is a practical consideration for practicing (esp. w/ vocalization) in a windy environment—as vital energy may be easily depleted.

Summer is the time of physical strengthening and moves toward fullness of expression in late summer. ●●●

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overlooked the one fundamental relationship sustaining my Being, that between my heart, my body, and the earth. Shintaido returned me to that union.

I was blessed with a particularly beautiful Sunday afternoon, which drew the group from its cramped studio out onto an open field. It was here I first met with the earth. Right away it asked for my trust.

“Take off your shoes.”

Put off by the slight April breeze that lingered in the air, I hesitated, concerned that my feet might get cold.

“Well if your feet get cold, you can always put your shoes back on.”

Though beneath me ran a thin line of fear, anticipating the earth to be cruel, I proceeded to remove my socks and shoes. With this I engaged in my first act of trust. The moment my foot touched down on the field’s soft green carpet a quiet warmth radiated through my body. While I had walked with bare feet countless times, I had never experienced warmth quite like this. It was as though the earth was pushing its love through the tip of each blade of grass. There, with the earth carefully holding me, my experience of Shintaido began.

The group went through a series of loose jumps to open the body to what was to come. With each jump the earth reminded my body of its freedom. My limbs fell as they pleased. My breath surrendered to the force of my weight meeting the ground. I was a child, discovering a new trick of my body. I was shaking myself free, becoming aware of my ability to move. Looking through a giddy shade of laughter, I noticed all of the other bodies doing the same thing. Everyone there one had done this many times before. Yet they all wore a freedom as though, like me, they were discovering the very first jump. Their experience had not faded. Each movement was new. Each moment was new. My body never fell exactly the same. I was moving with time, not in it, or through it, but with it.

I watched this group of adults whom I had just met fall back into childhood. Unabashedly they stripped down to their souls, and revealed an armor of pure spirit. Their breath was not forced from the shallow lung, but was sent forth from the body’s core. With each surge of air they shared a piece of their sound. With the growing awareness of the pure spirit that surrounded me, I sank, turned, and sank back into my weight. I

fell in love with their freedom, their faith in the world. Though they were just bodies, human, like mine, they moved with an energy I could not understand. There was my wall— I needed to understand it. I had no trust.

The exercises moved on to a more rigorous phase. As the need for my body’s surrender grew, so too did my resistance. I had to trust my body. I had to trust the earth. I had to trust my partner. But I realized I did not know how to trust anything, not even myself. I was brought to a place of utter loneliness. I watched these angels of possibility leap across the field. Faced with their freedom, their purity, I was able to see just how stark the walls of my prison had become. I could not console myself with will or deception. I knew better. It was then that a growing lump took hold of my throat.

My body, though strong, ached when I demanded it perform these new tasks. It cried under the gun of surrender. My body did not know how to trust. I had taught it to fear, to run, and now it was teaching me pain. I wanted so

much to love my body, for it to love me. I wanted to be like the other bodies leaping with laughter across the field. But I could not laugh. Instead I shouted at my legs to follow my command.

“Give in! Won’t you? Just let them lead you!”

My body only clenched, sensing the fear in my voice. Body and I had separated long before. We had forgotten how to have a relationship, with each other, with the world. For the first time I felt the sadness of my body. Through years of beating my body into submission, I had robbed it of its voice, of its place in the

world. I had forced it to join me in isolation. There I stood on that open field of green, drenched in the painful awareness of my homeless state. I was a mere visitor, observing the living.

Yet, the others were not put off by my wall of fear, they did not shut me out as the foreigner. My pain, no longer able to conceal itself from my face, only seemed to intrigue them more. They wanted nothing but to help me transform. Their eyes compassionately looked through me, speaking their own years of hidden pain. I wanted to believe what they said, that they too had once been afraid. But my heart was not ready to let them in.

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*I watched as their feather-like bodies transformed, taking on the force of a hurricane wind. Peeling their open chests from the sky, they curled themselves down to the ground. I rounded my body, imitating their curled balls. Then each tightly wrapped cocoon burst open with life. One by one, they ran across the field carried only by the weight of their primal screams*

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I did not understand how they were able to put their trust in someone who could not even trust herself. They opened their bodies to me, and offered to take my pain. I was overcome with the fear that I might somehow contaminate their freedom, that rigidity would slip through my fingertips and swallow their joy. But with each wave of fear I emitted, their bodies returned a fluid love. It was as though I was touching pure spirit. Though their movements were soft and gentle, in the face of fear they would not budge.

That growing lump in my throat had slowly worked its way to my face. It began to swallow me whole. I became weak, both in body and in will. I knew that I could force myself to stiffly simulate the moves, but I was not satisfied with pretending. I wanted to be a part of the world, to hear the sound of my breath emanate from the universe. I wanted to know how it felt to be real. Instead all I could feel was the still sense that I was slowly draining out of myself.

I watched as their feather-like bodies transformed, taking on the force of a hurricane wind. Peeling their open chests from the sky, they curled themselves down to the ground. I rounded my body, imitating their curled balls. Then each tightly wrapped cocoon burst open with life. One by one, they ran across the field carried only by the weight of their primal screams.

My body did not move. Lonely and scared, I stayed there huddled on the grass— my mouth opened wide, waiting for my scream to come. I was powerless. I had tapped into my will's last resource. There was no voice to be found. My breath faded to a faint gasp, as I watched a separate universe dance before my eyes. I wanted to join in the dance. I wanted to love the world back— to say it, sound it with my breath. But my depleted body had been emptied of all sound.

I was broken by a wave of tears that flowed straight through me from the earth's core. I bled rivers of pain buried from ages past. My body wearily released its anchor and quietly sank into the ground. It was at that moment, when pushed to my death, that I filled with the universe's care. I could feel it pumping its breath into me when my own would not come. The soft green grass that had cushioned my step now took on the weight of my world. Gently, I slipped to the other side of real.

I died on that field. I gave the world my "self," and in return was given its silent ground. I was prodigal daughter returned to her root, the homeland from which she had come. The gap that had separated my body from world was now filling with genuine love. I trusted the earth, like a child does its mother, to hold me safe in its Being. I felt freedom. I touched my home in the world. I "stood under" it. I needed to die on that field, to descend into its soundless stillness. For there could be heard the earth's quiet vibration teaching me how to love.

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## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

While attending the celebration of Shintaido of America's 25th anniversary, I had the pleasure of studying with Tomi Nagai-Rothe. She instructed her students to look for hidden treasure. As we progressed in *keiko* (Shintaido practice), she suggested that we might find this treasure in our partners. Later that day I had offered to facilitate a workshop for people who were interested in writing. It occurred to me that the hidden treasure was a useful metaphor for the kind of writing practice I was trying to elicit. Writing done as a practice rather than a goal-directed exercise can be a way to mine the treasure hidden in each of us.

For about two hours we did timed writing practices. A topic was announced, the participants began writing; no crossing out, no stopping to think, no editing allowed. We started with short easy assignments. Write about something in this room for two minutes. We progressed to longer time periods and more introspective topics, such as "Write about a hard choice you have made for ten minutes." At the end of each writing period we read what we had written to the group. No feedback, either positive or negative, was offered. We simply moved onto the next writing practice. Our last assignment was to look at the picture on the Shintaido 25 brochure, to imagine ourselves on the beach with the practitioners and to write about what we felt.

These pieces were taken away and allowed to rest, then edited or reworked by the writer. Here are the results of this practice.

—Annelie Wilde

## Hidden Treasure: Shintaidoists Write

compiled by Annelie Wilde

### from Debra Zawielski

The photo on the front of the brochure warms my soul. It gives me the same type of comfort that I get from a hot bowl of stew on a cold New England evening. The photo is full of old friends, some of whom I see on a regular basis, some I no longer see. It is an older picture, perhaps I'm there too, or maybe not, but I've done *keiko* with them many times for many years.

We are on a beach, somewhere on Cape Cod or on the New Hampshire coast. It is early morning, and we are the only

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## Hidden Treasure

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ones on that stretch of shoreline, save for the lone beach-walker and one or two ambitious joggers. They eye us cautiously, perhaps thinking us crazy and maybe we are. In a way, that seeming insanity brightens my spirit and frees me from myself. It lets me express emotions that need to be shown, shared or even dumped. I love all of these people. They are more often than not, my family of choice. I love what transpires between us; I love the smiles, the laughter, the grunts and cries of inner struggle that sometimes are released. Whatever it may be, it becomes a cleansing, a way to become new again and again. What a gift!

Then I come to a place in my life where I don't love Shintaido anymore, where I tell myself, "I'm done." Until I find myself mysteriously back at another *keiko*, maybe on a beach somewhere, perhaps on a glorious green field, surrounded by towering evergreens. I remember, or maybe my body reminds me why I'm here and the joy begins anew. I start to feel and allow others in, really in. Even though there is some fear, I welcome and embrace it, knowing I will grow.

### from Michael Pope

As probably can be expected, there are so many thoughts spinning, so deeply and quickly, making words seem in many ways inefficient. Physical Graffiti— Yes, this is the phrase that ran through me non-stop during the *gasshuku* (Shintaido retreat). A phrase that best sums up my experiences of Shintaido. The graffiti world; it's bound so intimately into my past and my youth. The voice by which I vented and raged, created and expressed, was defined by living in New York City. The family that I turned to in all of the overwhelming shit of teenage rebellion was a family of misfits, clowns, criminals and, ultimately, artists. An underground world with unwritten *kata* and *gorei*, technique and philosophy, madness and moments of truth and beauty. We were poorly educated and over-opinionated without doubt, but uncensored in the face of a world we didn't understand.

Shintaido, in many ways, is an evolution of this. A new style, a new subculture, not based in spray paint but on the human



body. Not lost in rage at the world around us but fueled to shape the world that can be. We are outlaws still, fools, friends, lovers, loners and Indian chiefs. Together we possess the vast spirit of interpersonal expression. We are the physical graffiti artists of this time.

### from Deirdre Crowley

What would someone who had never experienced Shintaido think of this photo? Would they think he was being tortured and in pain? Could they possibly know the euphoria that can result from opening oneself in this way? Opening, opening and still opening more— eyes, toes, hands, *koshi* right down to the very pores of your skin, to the very molecules within you releasing that which is the very essence of your being. Supported from behind— ah, the warm, familiar comfort on

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*Finally the temptation was too great and one of them scrambled down the dunes to mock us. "Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!" he yelled as he ran back and forth stopping frequently to catch his breath, more from the strain of laughing so hard than from actual exertion. I was mortified.*

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the lower back that lets you know that it's ok; you are not alone, express yourself, make noise like you have never made before, expose yourself completely.

Could someone looking at this photograph know that there is a place, a result, no, better yet, a powerful stream of energy that is there, has been there all along, and is yours just for the asking? You must enter naked, stripped of the facades of daily life— the personae. To merely dip a toe in is more painful than just diving in with your whole body and soul— surrender.

What would someone who has never experienced Shintaido see? I don't know, but I see surrender. Surrender to something greater than oneself; to exposure without self-censorship. I will show you my worst, but I will also offer you my best, that which is most beautiful within me.

I look at this photo and I am reminded of the many long hours of *keiko* I have spent on Ocean Beach. Early on I was petrified to use my voice, to run Eiko with the joggers and the dog walkers all around. Eiko is indeed only made more painful by holding back and I made myself miserable.

I can still imagine the drunken men on the dunes one early Saturday morning. They were still inebriated from the night before. As we ran Eiko they called out— making fun of us.

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## Hidden Treasure

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Finally the temptation was too great and one of them scrambled down the dunes to mock us. “Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!” he yelled as he ran back and forth stopping frequently to catch his breath more from the strain of laughing so hard than from actual exertion. I was mortified.

Things have really changed. This week I found myself in Holland for a Touch Pro Shintaido workshop Ito was giving for 15 massage practitioners. The setting was the Dutch countryside. For our second *keiko*, Ito chose a beach along the Rhine River within the boundaries of a cow pasture. *Dojo* prep involved two shovels, and a couple of volunteers for flipping cow patties off the sand as a dozen cows watched curiously from the far end of our “dojo.” *Keiko* progressed beautifully ending with everyone following my lead in Eiko Dai. There was no holding back, no fear of being mocked, only letting go and floating into the mysterious pull of the movement under the watch of the participants, the cows and a half dozen boats passing by on the river.

After class I collected the shovels and our group slowly made its way back along the two-kilometer country road toward the

retreat center— each of us enveloped in a post-*keiko* glow. At some point Ito took a bokutoh-length shovel from my hand, raised it over his head in a slow arching movement and then began to run Eiko behind it. A man and woman sat at a turn in the road ahead, their pannier-laden bicycles leaning against the small bench. They smiled and laughed and I felt so happy as I watched this short, hakama-wearing, 59-year-old master instructor running as fast as he could behind an air-borne shovel. It was beautiful.

I learned later that the couple had asked the first participant passing by where she was coming from. “You look so happy, what have you been doing?” She explained a bit and then left it to the next three to add, “We have been on the beach doing some exercises with a Japanese man.” Then as if on cue Ito appeared running behind his “sword” and we all had a good laugh.

Today I am in that photograph too. I couldn’t care less if a couple of drunks decided to run a mock eiko. Maybe they would accidentally learn how much fun it can be...



### from Annelie Wilde

It was ten years ago, maybe more in California. We were on a sandy beach which we had trekked some ways to get to. I was still fairly new in Shintaido, and at the point where I chose to go to a *gasshuku* more because of the location than the *gasshuku* itself. In fact I was still very doubtful about this whole Shintaido business. Okada-sensei was about to deepen my distrust even more.

The sand was damp, sticky and deeply churned. We did warm ups; hops both small and large. It was hard. We rolled around in the sand. That was worse. I had sand in my hair, in my ears and down my back. I was gritty all over. Then we lined up facing the ocean, assumed the position, wide-legged-low-*koshi* and shouted to the ocean, HAH! again and again HAH, HAH, HAH!. Okada exhorted us to project, to use our bodies to hurl our voices. It was fun at first but quickly got tiring. Would there be no end? This was, after all, Shintaido, it could go on for a very long time. And it did.

We formed pairs facing each other. “Again shout HAH! Project your feeling!” I sent my voice over my partner’s shoulder into the ocean because that felt like the polite thing to do. It felt safe. “Now, look into your partner’s face and shout again HAH!” This was getting harder, I was getting nervous as well as tired. “Open your *koshi*, open your hands, go!”

I found I could make eye contact and look through my partner. Still safe. Then I got a partner who was unafraid.

With a gleam of delight he barked into my face. I barked back. His *koshi* came slicing forward. I found mine out of pure self defense. I started to laugh, I relaxed. My voice got louder, looser, deeper. We did this over and over again— new partners, different sounds. Eventually people were blowing each other across the beach with their voice. I’ve never had a *keiko* like this since and I’ve been to many. But I am forever grateful to Okada-sensei for releasing my voice. It has helped me enormously through the years; with Eiko, with partner *kumite*, with digging deep and finding *kiai* energy to use when I feel I have nothing left.

I wish I could tell you that I have found my voice in every day life. That is not true yet. It is still difficult for me to speak up in a group. Especially if I have to first collect that group’s attention to make myself heard. It is easier for me to communicate as I do now with words on paper. Written words can be taken back, changed, moved around, kept in a notebook and never shared. Yet I have chosen to share my words and my self with the Shintaido community because Shintaido has taught me to take risks, to step outside my zone of safety... HAH! •••



## Facing Death (an ongoing series)

*Shintaido practice embraces both life and death. In this issue, two members of our Shintaido community share with us their experience of the death of a close relative. Michael Thompson is a former Head Instructor of Shintaido of America, and was one of the organization's two founders. Chris Ikeda-Nash practices Shintaido in the Bay Area. It is an honor to be invited to step inside their stories and experience the end of life with them. Thank you, Michael and Chris.*

### A Death in the Family

by Michael Thompson

My brother Steve had a special satellite installed on his roof so that he could receive the signal from NHK, a Japanese broadcasting station. This was so that his wife Tami, who is Japanese, could watch entertainment and news programs, and so he could follow Sumo tournaments which NHK aired with English speaking announcers six times a year. He would send his daily analysis of each day's matches via email to a small group of aficionados.

The report he sent on September 17 was short and garbled and I wondered what was going on, since he took pride in his writing skills. It turned out that he was experiencing the first symptoms of a massive stroke which sent him to the hospital later that night. He had been waging a long uphill battle with lung cancer that had recently spread to his bones and brain, and his wife advised me to move up a trip that I had planned for the middle of November, the time I usually went to visit since it coincided with a Sumo Basho, if I wanted to see him one more time before he died.

While in the hospital, he rallied a bit, although he could only recognize his surroundings and family sporadically. At that point they decided that they would bring him back home to die since that was the one message he was able to transmit, if not verbally, at least through body language. His doctor resisted, citing all sorts of medical reasons which were entirely reasonable if the goal were to perpetuate his life as long as possible. But his wife and son were adamant and brought him home on the weekend of October 19.

I arrived on the night of the 23rd and they told me that he had been obviously happy to be back and had even sat up in his favorite chair to watch some television and drink a cup of coffee. But by the time I arrived he was pretty much bed-ridden and largely incoherent, although he did recognize me for a brief moment and said "thank you."

The family had been thinking of calling in hospice care and we decided to do it immediately since he was in a lot of pain and the morphine patches and pills weren't doing the trick.

They came on Friday the 26th and Travis, the nurse assigned to the case, took over. It was amazing to see the difference between his approach and that of the hospital nurses who had previously been there. It was obvious that he was dealing with a person and not with a case or a set of symptoms. We got Steve out of bed and he changed the mattress, sheets, pillows, all designed to make a patient as comfortable as possible. Another nurse came to set up a morphine drip and they removed the catheter which it turned out was a major source of the pain.

Later that night Travis came back, and we got Steve into a chair which we pushed into the living room. I turned the TV to a program about Cal Ripken, since my brother was a baseball fan and scholar, although I can't imagine that much was coming through. While he was sitting there, he called his wife over and asked her to take off his glasses and wristwatch. He had already removed his breathing apparatus. He then pulled her to him as best he could and kissed her. She said it was the

first time he had ever shown her affection in public (yes, we are a true WASP clan).

We got him back into bed and I put on a Merle Haggard CD since country music was another of his passions, and he fell asleep. His son Michael decided to sleep on the floor of his room that night, for the first time since he had come back.

At 2:35 am my door opened and his son told me that he was gone. He said he had woken up suddenly at 2:30, sat up bolt upright knowing instantly that his father had died. We ran around the house looking

for some candles and his wife, who is a practicing Buddhist, arranged them, burned some incense and chanted over his body while rubbing her prayer beads.

I think my main feeling at the time was one of admiration that he had done the dying thing so well despite what must have been excruciating pain and frustration at his inability to express his thoughts. I remember saying "good job" and "buon viaggio" (in Italian for some reason) at the foot of his bed. We all know that the underlying philosophy of Shintaido's movements (Dai Kihon) involves the cycle of life from birth to death and beyond, but it is naturally much easier to visualize and express the life part than the death part. I felt privileged to be present at his departure and that my brother had offered me the chance to see and experience the deep truth that death can be an ally—something to be embraced and not feared when the time comes and without which life would be meaningless. I do not subscribe to any religion or any particular version of an afterlife, but I feel now that death



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## Facing Death

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represents a kind of energetic transformation and that something survives these “mortal coils,” perhaps to recommence the “A-Un” cycle.

As a postscript, I would like to encourage everyone to educate themselves about and support the hospice movement in this country. It is one of the most enlightened ideas to come to pass in my lifetime.

### Life and Death

by Chris Ikeda-Nash

When my mother and my father were dying, I found both Shintaido and Tibetan Buddhist practices were helpful to me and easy for me to accept doing. Though I am not an expert in either, they were very useful to me while being with my dying parents, both for the fact of their imminent deaths and with the unresolved knots of emotions in our relationships.

My mother, Jane Blair Nash, was admitted to Stanford Medical Center in September. She had been experiencing chronic fluid congestion in her heart and lungs and chronic infections in one part or another of her body. Before she was admitted to Stanford, she felt so poorly that she refused a dialysis treatment in King City. Her doctor there gave her some higher level pain meds and convinced her that the doctors at Stanford could cure the infections and return her to a state in which she felt better.

I visited with her each of the last three Sundays in Stanford. (Ironically, I was born in another hospital nearby, before this one was built). The first week, she began to feel much better, but was very weak and slept most of the time. My two sisters were optimistic, at this point, that she could return home and live out her last days semi-independently. To me,

they did not seem to believe that she was likely to die almost any time. I met with her cardiologist, who said that she had improved so much that he thought that they could send her home in a few days. This was an hallucinogenic experience in which the fabric of reality became torn and two realities overlapped each other, slightly offset. The doctor seemed completely sincere, and also highly intelligent and knowledgeable in his field, yet, to me, ignorant in a holistic way.

The Stanford team also believed that they could arrange appropriate home care for her, while no one in King City, family or doctors, had been able to find such care available there.

She stayed at Stanford because one thing or another kept going wrong. She began to need dialysis almost every day and continued to need constant monitoring. I did discuss home care options with my mother and the medical team at Stanford. My sisters, Sarah and Kate, were also very active in visiting, looking at care options, and handled our mother’s affairs for her. Tom, who lives in Taiwan, flew over twice this summer. Steve, who lives near the Oregon border on his ranch, and is highly averse to urban areas, helped move our mother to Stanford and visited her there. When I discussed hospice care with my sisters, they thought it was still “premature.”

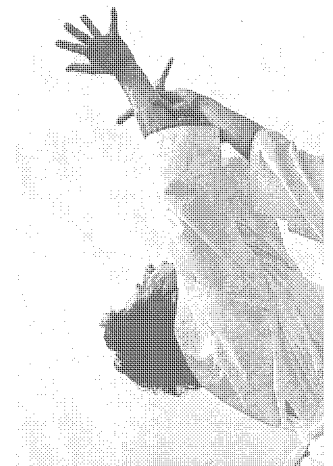
By last Sunday, my mother had continued to have problems with heart congestion, blood toxicity and systemic infections. Two cardiology interns talked with me when I got to my mother’s room. They believed that it might be possible to do an angiogram, find a blocked blood vessel next to the heart, and open it up with an angioplasty procedure. They believed that it might be possible to improve her circula-

tion so that the fluid congestion would no longer be an issue. The procedure had risks, worst case being the catheter probe dislodging arterial plaque which would then block an artery to her brain. My mother was alternately awake for three to five minutes, sometimes conversing briefly, and dozing for ten minutes or more at a stretch. I asked her why she had refused dialysis in King City, and she said she just felt so bad that she did not want to do it. I had not been able to get her to talk with me about it previously.

Later, one of the nephrologists (kidney doctors) came to talk while I was sitting with her at dialysis. She said that they were at the end of what they could do with dialysis. They removed as much fluid from her blood as they could, yet she still had the fluid congestion around her heart and in her lungs. If they removed more, her blood pressure would be too low to sustain her life.

She (the doctor) began to cry at this point. My mother was dozing in her bed, a spinning rotor pumping blood out of her from the tube in arm, pushing the blood through tubes, then through a long, cylindrical paper filter, (which looked remarkably like a gas filter used

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## Facing Death

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in an old trucks) and then pushing the blood back into her body. The blood seemed like a thick river of life diverted through plastic tubes mounted on a large mechanical box, with digital sensors and readouts.

Sarah and Kate soon arrived. Our mother had asked us to meet with her and give her our recommendations about what she should do now. I was afraid that one or both of them might have a very strong reaction when they heard the latest medical news. They were both strong and very present, and we were all able to say to our mother that we supported whatever choice of treatment or no treatment that she desired.

Sarah was the main contact person for the hospital and was receiving calls from time to time from different doctors. The content of these conversations was still disjointed and incongruent, with some offers of hope and new options, but also cataloging continuing decline and narrowing options. Finally, it seemed, Sarah and Kate were not distracted by unlikely offers of hope and accepted that our mother would die soon.

On Monday, Jane had a bone scan which revealed that the infection from the abscess on her lower back had reached her bones. Her doctors asked her children to come on Wednesday at 3:30 for a conference to decide what to do next.

Sarah called en route Wednesday to say that Mom had taken a turn for the worse and that she and Kate were on the road to Stanford from King City. When our mother had began dialysis on Tuesday, her blood pressure dropped dangerously low. She told them to take her off the machine (which they

did). I sat to finish up slowly some pressing work and ordered a "last meal" to eat at my desk as I got ready to leave.

At Stanford, mom had been moved from the mid level ICU to the Intensive Care Unit. A guide in a pink dress helped me find the right area through a short cut after several sets of directions. Sarah and Kate had already arrived, but not seen our mother. They also had paged her doctors, but had not seen any of them. Sarah wandered around and found the ICU nurses and our mother's room. Jane lay weak and mottled on her bed with an air mattress beneath her, and a light weight, thin, plastic cover of air panels above her, tubes in her mouth and nose. She would look alternately sleepily and vacant, and occasionally awake, confused and alarmed. We talked with the ICU doctors and some staff. We all stayed a few minutes, either close to tears or crying. Sarah and Kate went back to the waiting room and the ICU staff moved to other duties.

Finally I felt clear that it was time to say aloud what I had only subvocalized before to my mother as slept: "You are dying now. It is the end of your life. It is all right to let go and die. We will always be with you. We love you and you will never be alone." I visualized Buddha as a golden light above her body, with all the energy left in her body going to her heart, and from there, to the golden light. Sometimes, it would be a white light. "Your mind and the mind of Buddha are one." As she had once been a Christian, the image became the Virgin Mary, then Jesus. All the energy of her body went from her heart to them. "Your mind and the mind of Mary are one. Your mind and the mind of Jesus are one." We did "ah" together, channeling the sky and began to run Eiko.

Steve arrived, from rural Siskiyou County, with his daughter Kelly. At the same time, one of Mother's doctors after another began to show. We went to a small, adjoining room and squeezed the five family members and six or so doctors together. The ICU doctor had explained that the life support could keep her body going for some time. But he wanted to be clear that he felt that they should use procedures to help people, not subject people to them just because they could do so. Steve asked if anyone had told her that she was dying. He said that what I did was good. The head nephrologist said that there were no treatment options left. What did our mother want? What did we want?

Jane had twice refused dialysis in the last three weeks. She had never directly said so, but it seemed to all of us that she did not want to have life support used as a means for her to live on, in pain and discomfort, with little or no dignity.

The doctor promised that she would not suffer, and we had them remove the tubes. As we sat with her, we gently held her hands, said good bye to her, and visualized. She died within ten minutes. •••

Empty-handed I entered the world  
Barefoot I leave it.  
My coming, my going—  
two simple happenings  
that got entangled.

—Kozan Ichikyo

My sword leans against the sky  
With its polished blade  
I'll behead the Buddha  
and all of his saints.  
Let the lightning  
strike where it will.

—Shumppo Soki

(from *Japanese Death Poems*, Yoel Hoffman, ed. Tuttle, 1986)

## PRACTITIONER'S CORNER

## Give This Gift

by Jennifer Tobin

*Jennifer Tobin studied Shintaido in Albuquerque, and is currently attending law school in Madison, Wisconsin.*

Here's something that happened to me after September 11th.

I haven't been practicing very much recently, but on September 15th I went to the field near my house with my *bo*. I knew that I had to practice with *bo*. I had to have something solid in my hands. It wasn't enough to have my empty hands reaching toward the sky in A or O. I needed the tactile satisfaction of wood against palm.

It was difficult to practice. I would look forward and try to concentrate while doing *daijodan* or *jodan kiri harai*, but I didn't feel fully focused on practice. There was suddenly a world of people watching me practice. Even though I was alone on the field, I felt many eyes on my back. It was an eerie feeling and it's not one that I've had before. I have had the feeling that people were looking at me if I'm in an outside *dojo*, but those were real people who probably were looking at me. This was different. No one was there. I don't know where those eyes came from.

There was an urgent feeling to do *keiko* that day. Instead of being in the moment, I felt as if I needed to accomplish something, not only for myself but for other people. I felt like *keiko* was what I could give to the world. I didn't know (and still don't) what this gift meant, but it made sense to me at the time. It felt important that I give this gift. •••

## Super-A Timing with a Lion

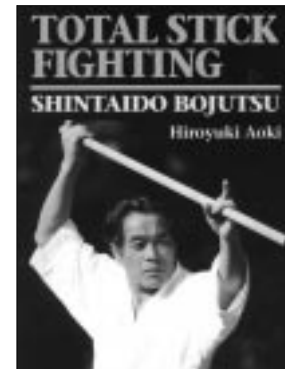
"I do not know who moved with greater speed—Arab Maina or the lion. I believe it must have been Arab Maina. I think he anticipated the charge even before the lion moved, and because of that, it was a battle of wills instead of weapons.

And then Arab Maina stood up. I do not know how he knew that particular instant was the right instant or how he knew that the lion would accept a truce. But however it was, the lion never moved. We left him slicing the tall grass with his heavy tail. He was thinking of many things."

—Beryl Markham, *West With The Night*

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... ETC

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