

Contemporary Seniors 1: Similar but Different

Over 50 years of training in budo, I have been lucky enough to meet or train under many notable martial artists. This year, I want to share my impressions, some deep set, some fleeting, about the men and women I met on the way.

There are several senior martial artists who I have trained with, beside, or under, albeit for a short time, separate articles about whom I have not as yet created. That is not a judgment of their worthiness or my respect for them, but that, since they are still active, I hope I can still train with or beside them.

In Aiki, Miguel Ibarra and Roy Goldberg, two former partners have taken different paths, the first toward street-style ju-jutsu and aiki-ju-jutsu, the second toward a very refined and difficult aiki-no-jutsu. Both were former students of Anton Pereira. Having done seminars with them and having invited them to teach at my dojo, I can say that each represents his branch of aiki skillfully. Chronologically and in terms of time in the art, they are technically my juniors, but in their fields, their skills set a standard to which I aspire.

I still reference Bruce Juchnik in a lot of the things I teach because we have found ourselves taking similar paths over the years even though he comes from a kempo and arnis background and I come from a karate and aiki background. He gets more relaxed and more effective every time I see him. If I can discover the details of a subtle movement he does—usually unconsciously—often it helps me refine some movements I am already doing consciously.

Bill Wallace, Jerry Piddington, and Ron Marchini each have different approaches to point-sparring, but all three were champions on the tournament circuit while on the East Coast I was avoiding tournaments trying to convince karate-ka that their kata were meant for more than just cooling-off. Wallace kicks like no one else, but in my humble opinion, more impressively, he has devised a system to support his style of kicking for both tournament and full-contact fights. I first became interested in Jerry Piddington's skills in a *Karate Illustrated* article. Piddington has maintained his great physical shape and still has a lot of subtle tricks based on how the body reacts to this or that movement. Ron Marchini bases his method on defense and attack zones. Each approach is valuable in its own right.

Larry Garron, former Patriot running back, was my instructor in Hakkoryu (as well as Judo and sojourns into Japanese Goju and Jodo). He was quite friendly with Dennis Palumbo who did a seminar with me, and whose dojo in Aurora, CO I visited. Larry is the head of his own system of martial arts and the late Dennis Palumbo (1943-2014), a Sandai Kichu in Hakkoryu, ironically took his first instruction as a teenager under Soke Don Angier, a key mentor in my development.

During my six years in Aikido, I trained with both Yoshimitsu Yamada and Kazuo Chiba (1940-2015), quite different in their approaches. Yamada Sensei: “To me, those who believe that Aikido is for fighting are misunderstanding it. I look at Aikido from another perspective, as an art, a search for beauty in motion...” (from USAF Aikido News). While Chiba, when I trained with him, seemed to want Aikido to be much more self-defense worthy. While Yamada Sensei was often jocular as he approached his class, Chiba Sensei always looked severe. To his credit, he was also a spiritual person, and in later years, publicly apologized to those he may have hurt while teaching his more martial Aikido. The three *deshi* of O-sensei, Yamada, Chiba, and Kanai (1937-2004), provided me with a panorama of approaches to Aikido and the visiting instructors Kanai Sensei invited for the East Coast Summer Camp, from Arikawa (1930-2003), Saito (1928-2002), and Tamura (1933-2010) to the then Waka-sensei (Moriteru Ueshiba) varied the picture even more.