



AJA NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2016

A Tribute to Professor George Kirby

Thomas Salander

It was a Road Trip. Baltimore, Maryland to Mount Airy, North Carolina for the American Jujitsu Association (AJA) National Convention, a first for us. "Us" was Will Harris, Mark Burton, Mike Parks, and me. This was something new; I had started taking jujitsu to learn self-defense, and now I was going to a convention? What happens at a self-defense convention?

As it turned out, it was (at least for the four of us) a series of training sessions with different instructors. We split up, mapping out the topics that sounded interesting with the intention of pooling our collective

knowledge later. There was value in that: each instructor had a different focus, a different take on how to move, how to execute a technique, how to ... defend yourself.

It was too much to process at the time, and long before most of us carried movie cameras in our pockets. Returning home, I tried putting things together, as if every instructor gave me a piece or two of a giant jigsaw puzzle. I thought there might be a grand picture where all the pieces fit in their own way. Later, I began to see something quite different. It was the teachers themselves, their personali-

ties, their styles, their attitude towards students and towards each other — there was the bigger picture.

Prof. George Kirby, Founder and Chairman of the American Jujitsu Association, the driving force from the beginning, has retired from the AJA Board of Directors. He has *not* retired from teaching, but after decades of being "The AJA", he is now "just" a member of the AJA. To many members of the AJA he's a name, an author, a video instructor. You may not feel much connection, but for many

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What Would You Do?

Gene Roos

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint from the previous edition due to the errant omission of the photos that accompanied the article. You can find the photos at the end of this article.

Imagine you are between classes at school and there is a young man in the hallway running towards you as he is stabbing other students.

What do you do? You wanted to take jujitsu, but you never got around to it. Again you think, "What do I do?"

The first thing to do is get out of the way of the attacker. Use anything that is available to de-

fer the attack (to protect yourself from being seriously wounded).

What is available? You have your backpack, your text books, chairs, desks, maybe even a fire extinguisher. Use ANYTHING you can. Here are two possible options:

Option 1: Swing your backpack so as to hit the attacker's eye or eyes. This may stop the attack temporarily.

Option 2: Use a heavy textbook to knock down the attacker's hand and then hit him

in the eyes (with the edge of the book).

Follow up to either option: Throw the attacker down to the ground (either forward or backwards) on his head. Odds are the attacker doesn't know how to fall properly without injuring himself and he hits his head on the ground. This may hurt the attacker enough that he doesn't continue his attack.

When you can safely do so, get a teacher or an administrator to handle the attacker and call the police.

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BOD Bio: Dave Boesel, President & Chairman of the Board



Dave Boesel is a Ph.D. political scientist whose career was devoted to research on policy issues for federal, state, and local governments. He has worked for the federal government (Defense Department, Department of Education), Johns Hopkins University, and Abt Associates, a private consulting firm. At these organizations, he specialized in leading research teams that

conducted large-scale, multi-year studies, often at the request of Congress. He also served in administrative roles, including Director of the National Institute of Postsecondary Education.

In 2003 he retired from the government and founded the Social Science Research Group (SSRG). In this capacity, he led research projects for the Department of Education; the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs); the Department of Labor; and the Arlington, VA school district, among others.

Dave's involvement with the martial arts began in the 1970s, when he earned a brown belt in Shorin Ryu karate. In

the 1990s, he began practicing Tomiki Aikido. He started training in jujitsu while still engaged in aikido, and after achieving a Shodan in Aikido, devoted all of his martial arts efforts to learning Budoshin Jujitsu. Dave practiced under the leadership of Dick Lab, Reggie Heefner, Dennis McCurdy, and Terry Feelemyer. In 1999, he became sensei at the Anne Arundel Community College Dojo, succeeding Heefner. He renamed the dojo "Kaiwan Budokai" – Bay Area Martial Arts School – because of its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. In 2011 Dave took first place in Masters Self Defense kata at AJA's Northern Regional Shiai.

Dave's service with AJA began in 2007, when, at the request of George Kirby and Dennis McCurdy, he worked with Jeff Wynn and Bill Swope on revising the AJA constitution. Thereafter, he served as Director of Recruitment and Newsletter Editor. Dave was elected to the Board of Directors in 2012, serving first as AJA Secretary and then as Vice President. He was elected President in July 2015 and Chairman of the Board in May 2016.

Dave and his wife, Gail, have three adult children – daughters Kyle and Alison and son Justin – all of whom are married – and five grandchildren. They all live in the Washington metropolitan area. The extended Boesel family loves to travel, and in various combinations they have visited most Western European countries; Jordan, Syria, and Turkey; South Africa; Mexico; and the Caribbean (many times). Dave loves to Scuba dive, as do his children, their spouses, and his two grandchildren. ☺

STUDENTS & PARENTS: CONCUSSION AWARENESS

Injuries or concussions are very rare in AJA dojos. However, they do occasionally occur. Here is some really usable information on concussion awareness for you as a parent and as a student. Please download this information, read it, and keep it for future reference:

For students/athletes:

www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/athletes.html

For parents:

www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/parents.html

For general information:

www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/index.html



SENSEI/INSTRUCTOR: CONCUSSION AWARENESS TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

If you're an instructor and NOT yet Concussion Awareness Training certified go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/> take the FREE 30 minute course, pass the FREE exam, and secure your FREE Concussion Awareness Training Certificate. This is an insurance coverage requirement.

Also, make sure you're making the information presented above in Students & Parents: Concussion Awareness, available to your students and their parents on a regular basis, either by printing up the documents and handing them out in class or providing students and parents with the links so they can download the information themselves.

Upcoming Events

Northern Region Seminar and Shiai

Where: The Orokawa Y in Towson (aka Towson YMCA)
600 W. Chesapeake Ave
Towson, MD 21204

When: Sunday, July 24, 2016
8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Cost: \$50 for adults
\$35 for youths 17 & under

Notes: Seminar instructors include Tony Maynard, Bill Stockey, George Parulski, Bruce Jones, and Will Harris. The day will include waza competition for all ages/ranks (no kumite/sparring competition).

Contact: Paul Klara
pcklara@verizon.net

Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Yudanshakai Summer Camp

Where: North Oaks Park
Community Room
27824 N. Camp Plenty Rd
Canyon Country, CA 91351

When: August 12-14, 2016
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily

Cost: Varies based on days/events attended

Notes: Please visit www.budoshin.com/seminars.htm for complete details and registration links.

George Kirby Seminar

Where: Woodmont Program Ctr
2422 N. Fillmore St
Arlington, VA 22207

When: Saturday, Nov 5, 2016
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
(date is tentative)

Cost: TBD

Notes: Look for more details as we get closer to the event. Advanced registration is recommended.

Hosting an Event?

Please send pertinent info (what, when, where, cost, how to register) to:
Newsletter@AJA-email.org

Training in Japanese Swordsmanship

Thomas Dineen

“What’s the point of learning about a weapon whose practical value mostly disappeared in the 19th century?” I wondered when my first jujitsu sensei, Prof. Dennis McCurdy, appeared in our dojo with a bag of bokken (wooden swords) that we’d be using that day.

After several such classes, however, I became so fascinated by Japanese swordsmanship that I took a break of several years from jujitsu to get my shodan in *iaido* (ee-EYE-dough).

First, a description of this somewhat esoteric discipline. *iaido* is the art of drawing the Japanese long sword, parrying attacks of and cutting down imaginary opponents, flicking their blood (also imaginary) off the blade, then resheathing the sword. Some practitioners use live blades (*katana*) to maximize realism, but many prefer dull-edged swords (*iaito*) for a degree of safety.

This element of danger—seeking deep understanding of a deadly weapon—adds emotional gravity to training in *iaido*. Few activities inspire such intense concentration. Advanced practitioners strive to appear to be fighting real, though invis-

ble, opponents by cultivating *mushin*...a state of being focused yet open to all contingencies, free of distracting thoughts or emotions.

Like many Asian arts, *iaido* evolved from combat techniques (*jutsu*) into a martial path (*do*) that helps develop—in addition to coordination and good bearing—moral qualities such as respect and self-control. Even benevolence comes into play, as when a swordsman applies mental pressure to de-escalate a fight before he and his opponent have drawn swords, or when he chooses to spare a wounded enemy from a final, lethal thrust or cut.

The art has been influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, Zen, and the code of *bushido* (“way of the warrior”) adhered to by the samurai class.

A literal translation of *iaido* (“way of mental presence and immediate reaction”) conveys its more subtle psychological aspects. The sword offers a way to heightened awareness and responsiveness, akin to the “sixth sense” that many martial artists seek to develop. Some *iaidoka* pursue the ideal of *ki*

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What Would You Do?

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Obviously no one wants to be cut or stabbed by an attacker with a sharp weapon. Learn to use your environment. Pick up objects (staplers, tape dispensers, paper weights, books, etc.) that you can throw at the attacker's eyes (only attack the eyes). Pick up objects (a chair or student desk) that you can use to keep the attacker at a safe distance and hopefully keep him from cutting you.

The attacker with a knife can inflict damages by slicing or

stabbing. The wounds can range from a superficial flesh wound to something severe enough to be fatal. When an attacker has a deadly weapon and a transportation method to deliver it, do not worry about hurting him in order to stop the attack. Hurting your attacker to the point he is incapacitated may be your only chance at survival.

Now go sign up for those jujitsu classes you never got around to taking! 🐾

Option 1



(1a) Attacker with a knife runs toward the defender.



(1b) Defender takes a left foot arc step and right hand swings his bag at the attacker's eyes.



(1c) Defender's left hand drives downward the attacker's face to the ground.



Optional Finish

(1d) As the defender hits the attacker, his left hand is placed in back of the attacker's neck.



(1e) Then the defender's left hand drives downward the attacker's face to the ground.

Option 2



(2a) Attacker with a knife runs toward defender.



(2b) Defender takes a left foot arc step and starts to knock down the attacker's right hand.



(2c) & (2d): The defender knocks down the attacker's right hand, then the defender strikes the attacker's eyes with the book edge



(2e) The defender's left hand drives the attacker's face downward toward the ground

A Tribute to Professor George Kirby

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of you the connection goes far deeper than you can imagine.

Prof. Kirby is a Teacher. Not just a teacher of martial arts, or jujitsu, or self-defense, but his professional career as a high school teacher brings a different approach to teaching — and learning — martial arts. Prof. Kirby was one of those instructors in North Carolina decades ago, and maybe the one who had the longest lasting influence on me.

One of the things I learned from him that seems unusual in martial arts instructors is to teach with a sense of humor. I will never master the groan-worthy puns his students have come to expect, nor will it come as naturally to me as it seems to for him. I know some instructors have said the humor isn't professional, but I've also seen humor start to creep into some of those same instructors' classes. Someone could write a dissertation just on the many advantages of relaxing in the martial arts, and there is no better way to get a student or a class to relax than with humor.

While his humor is one of the more noticeable ways Prof. Kirby differs from the stereotype of a martial arts instructor, it is far from the only one.

Instead of teaching an ancient, ossified art, he teaches his students to experiment! Of course, after experimentation is evaluation, but in this way, every student not only gets a better understanding of how a technique works, but they may even have an opportunity to improve the art! And he follows his own advice: the Tai Otoshi you see in his 1985 book looks different from the Tai Otoshi you may see him teach now. Some students have even objected "*Wait! That's not the way it looks in the book!*" He's happy to explain what has changed, why he now does it differently. The short version is he is a life-long student: repetition, experimentation, evaluation. Rinse and repeat.

Which gets to a more fundamental point: everything and everyone changes. Whether it's the mix of students in the dojo, the attitude(s) they have at any given time, the way an instructor interacts with their class or evaluates a student's performance; it all changes. This scares people, and maybe it really is not an approach that's right (or right at this time) for them. He's both a teacher and a student. Off the mat, he just wanted us to call him George.

I believe many of the things that set Prof. Kirby apart after that first encounter are characteristics he has

molded into the AJA, an organization rare, if not unique in the world of Martial Arts.

The AJA is made up of many styles of Jujitsu. We talk, we share, we work with each other. There is not "the one best ryu". Instead, we are a group of students, with slightly different ways of getting to basically the same place. The AJA helps us get a little further along our path.

Prof. Kirby believes he is leaving the AJA in good hands. I know we are going to work very hard to validate his trust. I still look forward to the Christmas card from George, Adel and Kim with another interesting story in rhyme which I read and shake my head in amusement. I look forward to seeing him again at camp this summer where we will both teach, both be students, and both continue to learn.

Most of all, I look forward to many years visiting with the man who built a structure within which I was able to learn, who I first met as a Teacher, and who I now am pleased to call a friend.

Dōmoarigatō Gozaimásu, Sensei 🙏

Yudansha Promotions (since 1/1/2016)

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Ben Hirata	Shodan	1/15/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Damon Cronin	Shodan	1/29/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Kelly Garcia	Shodan	1/15/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Jason Claus	Nidan	1/29/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Jason Hirata	Nidan	1/15/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Jodi Canapp	Nidan	4/22/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
William Griffin	Nidan	1/29/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Joe Walstrum	Sandan	4/22/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense

Training in Japanese Swordsmanship

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ken tai icchi, a feeling of the body, sword, and spirit being seamlessly entwined.

Iaido training is based almost exclusively on solo kata, allowing you to practice alone. While I enjoy the camaraderie of jujitsu, the need for training partners can limit even the most committed jujitsuka to a few hours of class time per week. But with only your sword and a belt to hold it, you can practice iaido whenever you want, wherever space allows. It can be simultaneously relaxing and deeply focused, not unlike qigong or other meditative arts.

Iaido also has an element of time travel. Dressed in skirt-like trousers called *hakama*, which originated in the 6th century, you wield a sword whose design goes back at least to the 12th century. You study and endlessly refine the graceful, often complex movements used by samurai for hundreds of years.

It's hard to overstate the veneration accorded the sword in Japanese culture. Katana made by famous swordsmiths are prized by collectors for the beauty of their *hamon* (visual outline of differential hardening of the steel blade) and other aesthetic qualities. As students of a Japanese art, all jujitsuka ought to be acquainted with the basic history and construction of katana.

Iaido deepens such understanding by observing the punctilious etiquette (*reishiki*) governing the handling of swords, which in turn reflects the formalities of samurai life.

I've seen people fail promotions over matters of etiquette...not bowing at proper times or sloppily handing a sheathed sword. You can also fail based on technical fine points, such as using a sword that is unacceptably short (and thus easier to handle), or executing forms too fast or too slow.

In fact, as rank goes up, so do failure rates, making high rank in iaido a rare distinction. In recent years, the pass rate for 8th dan in one major sword federation was less than 5%...and you have to travel to Japan to test for the highest ranks.

Promotions are more formal in iaido than in jujitsu and most other arts. In the Zen Nippon Kendo Renmai (ZNKR), which oversees much iaido training worldwide, exams in the U.S. are generally held twice a year as part of weekend-long seminars; there are no local exams conducted at individual dojo. Judges come from all over the U.S. and often Japan.

Through 3rd dan, in tests you execute only five randomly chosen techniques of the twelve *seitei-gata*, or standard forms. These were established in 1969 to consolidate ele-

ments from several major Japanese schools (*ryu*) of swordsmanship.

You have six minutes to bow in before the judges, complete the forms, then bow out. If you take longer, you will likely fail. And if you appear rushed in avoiding going over six minutes, you may also fail. The goal is to come as close to finishing in exactly six minutes as possible...without being able to check your time during testing.

Compare this with a jujitsu promotion at your own dojo, where advanced ranks may be asked to perform dozens of techniques and improvise defenses over the course of an hour or more.

This contrast underscores the minimalist austerity of iaido. It may sound limited to practice only twelve forms thousands of times over many years, but this attention to detail reveals the subtleties of the draws, cuts, thrusts, weight shifts, and footwork that go into apparently straightforward kata.

With experience, it's easy to discern a swordsman of high rank merely by the way he performs a basic horizontal draw. It will be smooth and effortless, with no tension or extraneous movement. (Serious music listeners may sense the same quality in a great violinist or guitarist playing a single note or chord.)

Although iaido concentrates on individual physical and moral self-refinement, competitions (*taikai*) are often held at large seminars. Here, judges assess two iaidoka performing the same forms side by side. The better competitor advances to the next round until a single winner remains in each rank.

Iaido has much to offer as a complement to jujitsu. It reminds us that our art developed among armed and armored warriors and familiarizes us with a preeminent ancient combat weapon. Iaido also focuses strongly on the *tanden* as the place from which energy derives (and is near the hilt of your sheathed sword).

As with many jujitsu techniques, in iaido it helps to imagine energy emanating from the *tanden* at the draw, then "re-centering" that energy when resheathing your sword at the end of a technique. Careful breath control is also crucial in iaido, and reflects how it can apply in jujitsu (e.g., exhaling at the end of a form).

Because you must conjure opponents out of thin air, iaido compels you to develop "situational awareness" of how you may be attacked—an obvious complement to jujitsu practice. You also discover that some of the defensive positions we assume in jujitsu echo common stances in

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Training in Japanese Swordsmanship

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iaido (e.g., *chudan-no-kamae*).

Other Japanese sword arts of interest include *tamishigiri* (cutting targets—usually tatami mats—with a katana) and *kendo* (where two armored opponents fence using straight bamboo swords called *shinai*). The latter, of course, don't look or feel like katana; as kendo gained great popularity as a 20th century sport in Japan, iaido was promoted as a way to preserve a cultural connection with handling actual swords.

You don't need expensive equipment to begin exploring. Go buy a \$10 bokken and pick up one of the well-known texts on swordsmanship noted below. Bokken have been used for centuries and, in 1612, legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi used one to defeat handily an opponent who was armed with a steel sword.

Jujitsu instructors could imitate Prof. McCurdy and consider integrating a bit of sword training at their own dojo. Just don't be surprised if one or two students slip off to train full-time in swordsmanship.

Recommended Resources for Additional Information:

- All-US Kendo Federation (AUSKF: oversees iaido and kendo in U.S.; includes dojo list): <http://www.auskf.info/iaido-new/index.htm>
- *Bokken: Art of the Japanese Sword*, by Dave Lowry (1986)
- *Flashing Steel: Mastering Eishin-Ryu Swordsmanship*, by Masayuki Shimabukuro and Leonard Pellman (2nd edition, 2008)
- *Japanese Swordsmanship*, by Gordon Warner & Donn F. Draeger (5th printing, 2001) 🍎

Mudansha Promotions (since 1/1/2016)

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Elijah Sassmanhausen	Hachikyu	2/19/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Ava Mosely	Shichikyu	5/5/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Elise Fonseca	Shichikyu	5/24/2016	Kaiwan Budokai
James Mosley, Jr.	Shichikyu	5/5/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Malik Pemy	Shichikyu	4/20/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Michael Free	Shichikyu	5/24/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Raef Strim	Shichikyu	2/29/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Eric Gundlach	Rokyu	2/19/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Braden Smith	Gokyu	6/22/2016	Baltimore School of Self Defense
Nissan Zahavi	Gokyu	4/9/2016	Belle Chasse Martial Arts
Victor Ellifritt	Gokyu	5/29/2016	Ho'on Dojo
Cody Claus	Sankyu	3/11/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Kale Claus	Sankyu	3/11/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Roger Chen	Sankyu	6/6/2016	Reston Jujitsu
Shannon Fetherston	Sankyu	5/20/2016	Vancouver Institute of Self Defense
Joseph Terrebonne	Nikyu	4/9/2016	Belle Chasse Martial Arts
Steven Trauth	Nikyu	4/9/2016	Belle Chasse Martial Arts
Jonathan Mumme	Ikkyu	4/9/2016	Belle Chasse Martial Arts
Kendrick Smith	Ikkyu	5/19/2016	Kaiwan Budokai

About the American Ju-Jitsu Association

The American Ju-Jitsu Association was founded in 1972, by George Kirby and William Fromm at the request of their sensei, Jack Seki, for the purpose of bringing different ryu of the art together in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and respect. Since that time it has grown from two dojo to approximately twenty-four, plus international affiliates. The AJA has established itself as a reputable organization within the martial arts community and works closely with other major Ju-Jitsu organizations in the United States and internationally in areas of mutual concern.

The AJA is a non-profit amateur athletic association registered with both the state of California and the United States government [IRS code 501(c)(3)]. It is a non-profit corporation with a charitable foundation status. Although originally recognized by the IRS as a "social club" because there was no other way to recognize the AJA as an amateur athletic association, formal recognition of the AJA as a true amateur athletic association, according to the criteria of the United States government, was secured in 1976 under the Sports Act of that year. To our knowledge, the AJA is the only martial arts organization in the U.S. that is classified by the IRS as an amateur athletic association. ●

Board of Directors

Position	Name	Email
President & Chairman	David Boesel	President@AJA-email.org
Vice President	Jeff Wynn	VP@AJA-email.org
Secretary	Kristine Wiscarson	Secretary@AJA-email.org
Treasurer	Marc Tucker	Treasurer@AJA-email.org
Western Region Director	Tony Damigo	WRDirector@AJA-email.org
Southern Region Director & International Competition Coordinator	Thomas Salander	SRDirector@AJA-email.org
Northern Region Director	Paul Klara	NRDirector@AJA-email.org
Director	Gene Roos	Director@AJA-email.org

Administrative Staff

Position	Name	Email
Certificates Coordinator	Barry Stebbins	Certificates@AJA-email.org
Communication Director	John Landry	Communications@AJA-email.org
Historian	Mike Balog	Historian@AJA-email.org
Materials Coordinator	Jef Rice	Materials@AJA-email.org
Membership	Kristine Wiscarson	Membership@AJA-email.org
National Awards	Vacant	Awards@AJA-email.org
National Standards & Certification Board	Harold Zeidman	NSCB@AJA-email.org
Newsletter Editor	Will Harris	Newsletter@AJA-email.org
Recruitment	Sherry Gibson	Recruitment@AJA-email.org
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