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Wellness PROFILE

Kaicho Nakamura

Strength and Tranquility

By Philip Smith

Kaicho Nakamura is one of the world's most respected grandmasters in the martial arts and the founder of Seido karate. As a holder of the rank of ninth degree black belt, Kaicho embodies the best of the centuries-old martial tradition of the noble warrior, statesman, and scholar.

These rarified but essential qualities guide the teaching and training at each of the Seido schools, or dojos, around the world. Today, Seido has thousands of students training in hundreds of schools in more than a dozen countries across the globe, including Australia, Israel, South Africa, Japan, Italy, Jamaica, and Poland. In the US, Seido dojos can be found coast to coast, from California and Washington to New York and Florida.

At 64, Kaicho maintains a rigorous, demanding training and teaching schedule. He has the strength, flexibility, and fighting skills of someone half his age. Not too long ago, Kaicho broke nearly 400 pounds of ice blocks with a single shin kick. As part of their advanced training, students learn to break boards and concrete blocks as a way to hone their physical technique and mental concentration.

Training at Seido is both physically and mentally intense. Classes begin with a 15-minute warm-up and brief meditation to focus the mind for the coming workout. The remainder of the highly challenging class can consist of reviewing techniques, learning new katas—a choreographed fight form—and, of course, sparring. Students include men and women from all walks of life, from television personalities and doctors to chefs, firemen, and policemen. Kaicho's unique philosophy allows him to attract and train students ranging in age from 6 to 79 and beyond.



Most of us know karate as an entertaining sport seen in movies or a series of self-defense techniques that might come in handy if we were ever attacked on a darkened street. However, in its traditional form, karate is a lifelong pursuit of physical and mental discipline that leads to a greater enjoyment and understanding of everything that life has to offer.

"Karate is a way of life, a way of being," Kaicho told Life Extension. "I have committed over 35 years of my life to the study, practice, and teaching of the martial arts. I am convinced that karate has much to offer as we move forward into the twenty-first century. My purpose in founding Seido karate was to show what I feel is the true essence, the kernel of true karate-do: the training of body, mind, and spirit together to realize the fullness of human potential."

As a young man, Kaicho was attracted to the tradition, discipline, and goals of constant self-improvement that are so much a part of the martial arts. In 1965, he won an international match against the Thai kickboxing champion and quickly became a national hero. A year later, he moved to New York City to start a branch of Kyokushin karate in America. In 1976, he founded his own school, replete with its own philosophical direction and named it Seido, which can be translated as "the sincere way."

For Kaicho, a student of karate must develop excellent technique and fighting skills, as well as—and even more importantly—impeccable character by becoming a modern-day samurai. In traditional Japan, the samurai were trained not only in the art of war, but also in poetry, calligraphy, painting, ethics, and the tea ceremony, so that they could better understand the value and preciousness of life.



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As part of the program, students must teach those who are different and may not have the same advantages, such as the deaf, blind, mentally challenged, or homeless. Classes for the deaf are taught in sign language. Both students and teacher come away with a better appreciation of how fortunate they are in life.

Additionally, Seido has annual benefit tournaments that raise money for critical causes such as breast cancer research, shelter for homeless children with HIV, and domestic abuse. To date, the Seido Juku Benefit Foundation has donated more than \$200,000 to a variety of not-for-profit organizations, including the American Red Cross, Hale House, the New York City fire and police departments, and Sunshine for Kids.



Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) recently expressed her appreciation for the charitable efforts of Seido: “I applaud the Seido Juku Benefit Foundation’s efforts to raise funds to support programs that assist people with breast cancer and to benefit families of New York City police and fire departments.” New York’s Republican Gov. George Pataki echoed that sentiment, noting that “the generous and kindhearted spirit of those present reflects the core principles of Seido karate by supporting the worthy endeavors of the Seido Juku Benefit Foundation.” For Kaicho, his students must learn that responsibility for themselves also includes the community at large—that we are all connected.

In June 2006, Seido karate will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary with its 2006 Saiten, five days of celebration held at Columbia University in New York City. Thousands of students and honored guests from around the world will gather to watch karate masters demonstrate technique and to participate in seminars. At this celebration, everyone can realize the benefits of karate in terms of optimal physical conditioning, mental training, and a life lived long and well.

In recognition of Seido karate’s valuable contributions to health and fitness, Life Extension will be one of the celebration’s sponsors. For more information on Kaicho Nakamura, Seido karate, or Saiten, please visit www.seido.com. Seido World Headquarters are located at 61 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010.



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