

Dennis Leri

## **Moshé on the Martial Arts**

*D. Leri et al: What has your history been in the martial arts?*

Moshe: Oh, I could write a book of it. And one which would sell like hotcakes. Because it's so interesting. It's an extraordinary story. If you want it in short, it's like this. You know that I went to Israel when I was very young; then it wasn't Israel, it was Palestine. There was a British mandate and the British being very great experts in politics use that rule that the Romans invented: divide and conquer. It means that if you want to occupy a place without having to keep a million soldiers there, all you (the British) have to do is say to Mr. X that Mr. Y said to you whatever, or you say one thing to Mr. X . and something else to Mr. Y, and then in five weeks the two bite each other and they continue that forever. And all you have to say is that you (Mr. X) are right, no, you (Mr. Y) are right. no, you (Mr. X) are right ... (Laughter) ... and for 25 years you can rule with no expense, but with a lot of bloodshed. Whose blood? The people who kill each other. They did the same thing in India. They do that the world over. And all the other people, if you think only the English do it. All those who rule other people do that. There is no other way of doing it. That's the experience of the world. Now, the British mandate in Israel was like that. And trouble between Jews and Arabs continues until today with the fomented hatred that the British introduced between the Jews and the Arabs. Because Arabs and Jews throughout their history lived like cousins together. And during the Golden Era of our culture, the Maimonides Era, lived our greatest poets and the Arab's greatest poets and mathematicians; Maimonides wrote some of his books in Arabic and some in Hebrew. And so did the Arabs. They knew Hebrew. It was the Golden Age for both of them. And they never had any quarrel. And then came the British and they produced a hatred which for 2000 years wasn't there, between Jews and Arabs. And so when I arrived in Palestine, we were a small group of people. And we never settled on any piece of land that wasn't bought. Have you seen any nation like that? How much did the Americans pay the Indians for taking their land? Beads, beads! We bought every piece of land in all of the first colonies. The first settlements, we had contracts for buying the land which were approved by the government as legal, and we paid cash and everything was all right. Then.

If I keep telling you the story like this, it will only take us two days. So what happens later is that the British would begin some kind of trouble and while Jews and Arabs were hitting each other, the British never intervened. They would send the police force to make peace, but the police force was more concerned with their horses than with the blood that was shed. They would come to the outskirts of the city, and they would stop

there for two hours to feed their horses. They would come into the city when there were already 50 dead on either side. Then they would come and disarm those who were there with weapons. Now, that also was quite "objective." The Arabs had swords and daggers, but as they wore them daily it was considered their attire and so not being armed, because Arabs actually carry daggers on their body all the time. But if a Jew had a knife more than five centimeters long, he was taken into custody because he was armed and responsible for any trouble. And so, one day a group of 43 Jews were arrested for defending their own lives, and the lives of their wives and children because of an Arab invasion into Tel Aviv. It's not that we went to the Arabs' settlement, but the Arabs came into Tel Aviv. The people who had a knife to defend themselves were taken into custody. And some of them were actually condemned to death because they were accused of making the trouble. Now at the same time, on the Arab side, there were people with long swords covered with blood, but it was their "daily attire." Of course after that, the Jews decided that they would avenge themselves for that bloodshed. And in the next skirmish, they did the same thing to the Arabs, don't think they did it only to us. And that's how the British ruled there beautifully, until we decided to gose them from there. We made their life so difficult that they had to go away. But before going away, they did us the greatest disservice that anybody can do. We asked the Arabs to stay. We said, we are here, you are here, we are going to live in peace. Stay, you can preserve all your rights, you will be equal citizens with us. The British went in everywhere, in all the Arab settlements and told them, " Don't be silly; there is a war on, you may be killed. Go away, go to Trans Jordan, go to Egypt, go there. In three days you will beat those bloody Jews, they have no arms, they want to start a state, how will they do that? If all of you stick together, they will be licked." And that's how the British produced what they call today refugees, because those who believed them left and instead of us being licked in three days, we licked the whole lot of them without arms, without anything, but sheer grit. You know how we licked their tanks? The boys went with a molotov to the tank, they were killed and the tank was destroyed. We have hundreds of people like that who gave their lives with the "arms" which the Jews didn't have. You can't destroy a tank with a molotov cocktail unless you put it under the tank, so there were hundreds of people who did that. And the refugees came about by the instigation of the British telling the Arabs that after the Jews are licked in three days, you will be back.

Now, there were many young people like myself; I was then 16 years old. I was like everybody else. We decided we will die, but these fucking British won't be here and we won't be pitted against the Arabs as enemies forever. And so we all formed the Haganah, which means the self-defense force. We were 300 young men and we had nothing – we didn't even have knives, but only sticks. So, we put ourselves together, we started learning how to use our hands, sticks, anything that comes to your hand, so as to be able to take care of the population who couldn't defend themselves at all. And we

had some boy who came from Germany who was an expert in Jujitsu and he gave us the first lessons in Jujitsu. After some time, we were all big experts in Jujitsu. We were training every evening. But then it was quiet for a few months, so people stopped training and gave it up. Then when trouble started again, it turned out that all those who didn't know Jujitsu, who hadn't trained in that way, none of them were injured or killed because they ran away and hid. But the big experts went against knives and swords with naked hands or with a stick and half of them were killed, or wounded. Look! The people who were not trained were saved because they ran, or they didn't put their necks out where it was dangerous. But these silly idiots who had a few months training and called themselves experts because in the gymnasium using mattresses, they could do something to somebody who was half attacking and half not, half of them were killed. It's just like if you do a month of Aikido and you try to fight somebody with a sword, then you will see what your Aikido is worth. So, that was that.

I couldn't take it. I felt, look, this Jujitsu is an idiotic system. Obviously, if I trained all my life and was interested in being a samurai and focused all my life on training, on fighting, I would be ready all the time. And even when walking in the street having my hands ready to draw my sword; I would know I am immune. But if you study for two months and then have two years without training and then believe that you can take a sword out of someone's hands who wants to kill you, then you are an innocent idiot. And your chances of success are fuck-all. So I sat down and said, look, I am going to propose something very funny. From all the tricks of Jujitsu I learned, say, most of them are worth nothing. If I am going to hit you with a knife, what would you do? Put your hand up? Therefore, this is the point to begin. Now, I will train you with that movement only, until you, not thinking or not knowing anything, you will still protect your head and your throat and your own body against any attack, building off the first movement that you do spontaneously.

And then I went and took a group of people and I took a knife and I attacked each of them and I photographed them. And I retained their first move, and I found that for certain, if you really attack, nobody stands there and gets the knife. He does something to protect himself. He doesn't attack you, but he substitutes an arm for the head, the throat, the back. If you try to hit somebody, you will see what they do; they won't stand with arms down, facing you, defenseless. When you hit them with a stick, they will turn their backs toward you and protect their heads and let you hit them on the back. And therefore, most people, even in the movies, when they show people hit with sticks for punishment, you will see they will always let you hit them on the back. And the back, it's painful. But it is not dangerous, unless, of course, you break every bone, which is possible. But even if you break his every bone, he won't die, he will die later, but not on the spot. So that was the idea, to find out what was the first movement one does. And I built a system of defense for any sort of attack where the first movement is not what you think to do, what you decide to do, but what you actually do when you are

frightened. And I said, alright, let's see now, we will train the people so that end of their first spontaneous movement is where we must start. And let us see now, we'll train them three months like we did before, give them a year off without training regularly, and then a year afterwards, try to attack again. And of course, the year afterwards, the first defensive movement they did, once they did their spontaneous first movement, was the continuation of that first movement. It was a remarkable thing. Most of the people knew what to do immediately without previous notice. They did it, and I was as pleased as punch and, of course, I got another few guys in the Haganah to help me and we worked about two or three years and perfected that idea. I submitted the thing to the direction of the Haganah which at that time was a secret group, nobody knew their names lest they exposed to the British and be hanged. And I remember until today, they gave me 25 pounds Sterling, which was in 1921 equivalent today to \$100,000. And with those 25 pounds, I published a book in Hebrew which contained that system and which was distributed to every man in the Haganah so those not in Tel Aviv but in other colonies everywhere could learn with the book what to do. There were pictures, everything.

The British, if the book fell into their hands and they knew that I wrote it, they would probably arrest me and ask me who the leaders of the Haganah were and so on. So the day the book was published, I was in France. And there was a man who was Colonel Keech, a British colonel, who actually gave us the 25 pounds to do it. So that was done. I left. I went to France to study mechanical and electrical engineering, and I completely forgot about that damned thing because I was preoccupied with my studies.

Now, one day, the people in the hotel where I lived knew that I knew some tricks as you saw here (Ed. note, Moshé had demonstrated some of the techniques he developed). The caretaker of the hotel knew that I was from Palestine, it wasn't Israel yet, and that I knew something about self-defense and that I could throw people, immobilize them, do things to them. And one day he brought to me a newspaper entirely dedicated to sports. He showed me, look, it says there's to be a demonstration where a Japanese Minister of Education, Professor Kano, is going to demonstrate Judo in Paris. The Japanese Ambassador to France would be present also. I didn't know who Kano was, but I was really impressed that a man who does some Judo, which I didn't know about, but which I understood to be a martial art connected with Jujitsu or something, is doing a demonstration, so I wanted to see. Actually, at the beginning I said I would have to prepare for exams and I don't want to be bothered. Then the people said, but why don't you go, surely it may be something interesting. So I decided to go and have a look. Because of the Minister of Education and the Japanese Ambassador there was a security guard there and every person who went in had to have an invitation and they checked for it. Now, I had nothing, so when I went there I couldn't get in.

When I arrived there and found nothing doing, I couldn't go in, I was insulted, peeved.

After all, I am interested in such affairs, I was going there not because the ambassador is there, but because I want to see what sort of thing Judo is. I had not the faintest idea. But it certainly concerned martial arts and therefore, I was interested. So I returned home and took my Hebrew book with the pictures, about this self-defense business, and went back to the door. I had a card and I put on the card, "You see that I am interested in and studied Jujitsu and I am interested in seeing what and how Judo is done. Would you see to it that I can see the demonstration?" and I wrote it to Professor Kano. I told the officer to go on and give it to him. I didn't have much hope that he would see it, and I didn't know if he could read French. He could read Japanese; maybe he doesn't know what it is, French, but I hoped for the best. And I stood there and waited about a quarter of an hour and then had the surprise of my life. A Japanese gentleman came out and opened the door for me, pulled the people apart, and brought me into the hall and gave me quite a respectable seat – not tops, but a place where I could see everything. (Laughter)

So I sat there and watched. I watched, I couldn't ... it looked very funny to me. Funny was this: Kano was a tiny little man and was old and his face had wrinkles and all that, and I saw behind him the Japanese Ambassador, Sigumaro, who was about 6 foot 5, something extraordinary for a Japanese, bigger than you and larger, a tremendous figure. And this little Kano, if Kano stood up to say something, the Japanese Ambassador stood up and he wouldn't sit until this chap Kano sits down. So I said to myself, very funny. Because somebody can do some tricks in Jujitsu or something, why should the ambassador look at him like he was god-like. Actually, it seemed ridiculous, I couldn't understand. The French minister sat there and he also couldn't understand what's happening.

Then, two chaps were brought in and one of them was Kotani and the other one, Ida. She (pointing to Mia) was in Japan, she was there when I met Kotani and told him, you're Kotani and you did the demonstration in 1932 in Paris. He just couldn't understand who knew that he was in Paris in 1932 giving a demonstration. But to me the demonstration was an extraordinary thing, that's why it sticks in my memory and why I knew him. Ida is one of the greatest in ground work, ground wrestling, in Judo. In Japan, there are two books by Ida, which are a rarity even in Japan – wonderful books. And although he was a small little chap he could do extraordinary things. Now these two chaps were there because Kotani studied mathematics in Cambridge. What Ida did, I didn't know, but they said actually Kano invited those two because they were high-grade Judo men and between them they gave a demonstration. They seemed silly idiots, one and then the other would fall, would fly through the air and did what looked like no work at all. And obviously it was pre-arranged business, because they really didn't do anything and then a chap would fly and then they would make noises, shout HA!, make a throw ... it looked completely cock-eyed ... I believed actually that it was pre-arranged, that it was a Kata, a practiced form, and not a randori or freestyle match. I

didn't believe in it, but the two were supposedly some of the best. One was sixth dan in the Kodokan and one was fifth dan, and they were both champions of Japan, twice before that. They were both extraordinary fellows. And their work in fact looked like playing. The platform on which they were doing it was like a ring; they were in the whole ring; they were everywhere. It was a magnificent sight, to this day I can always remember how I didn't know what I was seeing. So I looked and then the old little man came out, came into the ring and started doing Judo with the two of them. He tried to do randori with each one of them. These were two strong guys with terrible, fierce muscles and wonderful movement, and then there is an old man of about 65 or 70, but I couldn't tell what his age was. You know an old Japanese, how could you tell? And he does something very funny; he takes that young, strong, guy and makes a simple move, and holds him there and says, @!!\*# ... and throws him. Surely the other chap must let him do it and then he threw him again. I believed that that was real eyewash, and I thought to myself, Kano, you are such a big expert, you would live 10 seconds in my hands. (Laughter) And I really believed it, because you know I had real experience in battle with shooting and throwing knives and stones. And this looked to me to be a phony theatrical business. Therefore, obviously I could lick them. Now, I had nothing particular to do, so while the demonstration was going on, I sat there and watched. When it was over, everybody went away. The audience was there by invitation of the minister and everybody was in tuxedos and beautiful and I was like an ordinary citizen. I didn't want to push myself among them; I said, well, alright, I'm in no hurry; after they go out, I will go comfortably out, which I did. I intended to go home. I was rather disappointed. It was nice to see, but I didn't think that there was anything to learn from this show. So, I began to go out, and then suddenly somebody came to me and said, "Excuse me, are you Feldenkrais?" I said, yes. "Professor Kano asked whether you would be willing to have dinner with him." I nearly fell off my seat. I couldn't believe it. I thought it was a joke. Have dinner? So I said, yes, but my wife was at home and I told her that the demonstration wouldn't last later than 10 o'clock or something like that. I'll be back as soon as it's over, I'd said. (To Jerry Karzen) Well, I had very much nicer food there. (Jerry brought some blintzes to Moshé to eat and told him they were getting cold. Moshé obviously enjoyed the memory of that meal in Paris more than the prospect of some cold deli blintzes.) (Laughter) Anyway, they said, will you please wait here. And a big Rolls Royce comes up while people are still leaving and Kano gets in first and the Japanese Ambassador stands there and helps me to get in and there I sit between Kano and this Japanese Ambassador. I felt like sitting on charcoal. I didn't know what to say, didn't know what to do.

You must not forget that I was a young man, coming from a small, provincial place into Paris, finding myself suddenly at the summit of what I could've never imagined. I really didn't know what to do. Though I tried to be as composed as I could, I assure you I was covered with cold sweat and warm sweat several times during that ride. Where did they

take us? In Paris, there is a big hotel where all Japanese visitors of good standing go. It is a very expensive, exclusive hotel. Now, we arrived there, the Japanese Ambassador got out, and opened the door for me, and showed me out. We went into the hotel and he asked me, what would you like for dinner? I don't know what I ... I said, anything you have. He said, "You know, I like trout; I would like a trout for dinner." At that time, for me, it wasn't much of a dinner to eat a trout. I was a very strong man and young – I could eat five trout just to begin with as an appetizer. Well, I had to do what they did. We went into a very big hall about the size of a basketball court and it was covered with tatami mats like in a normal dojo. There was a small table on the floor, funny sort of way of sitting to eat I thought, but I sat on the floor too. And Kano sat in front of me and the two orangutangs, extraordinary fellows, one with a moustache, you could see he had tremendous power, served us. I remember it until today. You see, I suppose you sit here, that's me, and Kano sits over there and the big one comes to put something on the table and asks to pass making hand gestures. I couldn't figure out what he wanted, so I made with the hand too. (Laughter) I didn't know what he wanted, so he made with the hand again and then bent like that, he bowed. He made the hand pass between me and the table. Then every time he brought something to the table, he did exactly the same thing, pom pom pom. Alright, everything new and queer, so, and there I sat with Kano and I didn't know what he wanted. I couldn't understand why all this wining and dining.

And then he told me stories of his students like the orangutang, Nagaoka. At that time, Nagaoka meant to me exactly like if you told me Gerald Ford. (Laughter) So, keeping things rolling, I said, "Who's Nagaoka?" He said, he is the chief instructor of the Kodokan. Then, around 1930, there were two Judo greats, Nagaoka and Mifuni. Nagaoka was the most powerful man in the Kodokan and Mifuni, the fastest, the best in quality. Kind of a small chap, but he could beat anybody. Actually I heard very many very long stories; Kano told me extraordinary things. He told me about Mifuni afterwards, later – we met about 12 times afterwards. So, he told me that Mifuni was a born fighter and that two or three times every year, he had to go to the police and take him out of prison. Wherever there was a brawl, wherever there was fighting, Mifuni was there and usually an ambulance had to take away a dozen people and the police would arrest him. (Laughter) You see? Then Kano as the Undersecretary of State for Education in Japan had to use his influence. He told me that he had to get Mifuni out of prison perhaps 30 times in his life.

But here they appeared as two nice gentlemen, but they were dressed in a funny sort of way, with black belts and Judo gis (white practice outfits ... ed.), which I saw for the first time in my life. Both of them had on Japanese sandals. They served dinner for both of us. At the table were Kano and myself. Then after we had eaten they asked me who I was and what I was doing in Paris. I was astonished to find that he knew what a Bible is. I told him that I was from Palestine. He knew that there was a Bible, that there were

Jews in the world. I thought the Japanese wouldn't know a thing about it, but obviously he was a cultured man and who knew a lot of things. He asked how and why I went to Israel, who my patents were. I told him all my life history, but I had no idea what he wanted from me.

Then when the dinner was finished, he took my Hebrew book and said to me, "I can understand this even if I can't read it." He said, "But here is something I can't understand. Show me how do you do that technique (a knife disarming technique)." It was one of the parts of my book, my own invention, a modified Jujitsu trick. And that was in the book. So he obviously had looked at the pictures. He said, "This is very funny, I know 11 ryu's – means 11 different schools of martial arts in Japan that I learned before I started Judo. I learned 11 ryu's, and I know all the tricks that exist and I've never seen that trick. Where did you get it? So I told him the story I told you of how I did it. He looked bewildered and said, "That's wonderful. Show me again." So I did it with a real knife that was on the table, and of course, threw the knife away. I was strong and quick and I threw the knife. It flew away, half a mile. And then he clapped loudly and Nagaoka came and Kano gave him the knife and said, "You try it with him; I want to see it again." And I did the same thing again. And he saw it and approved. He didn't make any overt display ... you know, Japanese are impassive. But, he obviously was interested.

Then he read on in the book and said, "This is very interesting, but look, what you show here (a choke-hold ), it is no good." I said, "What do you mean it's no good? Why is it no good?" I said, in my experience, I had never had anyone who was capable of getting out of that except by being dead. He said, "hmmmm, no good." I said, "No good? Well, you show me why it's not good." The technique was that I get you on the floor, and use my hands against your throat and with the help of a jacket or anything like that plus putting full power into it, you have a minute to live. A minute, a second. You see black immediately. You choke. He said, "Try it on me." And as I was more powerful than this little man, I thought, with an old man like that I must be gentle. So I did it slowly and then I found that he just didn't mind what I was doing and so I pushed as hard as I could, and believe it or not, I blacked out. I didn't realize actually what was happening. He said, "You see, it's no good." (ha ha) So I asked him what happened; I didn't know; I saw black. So he explained to me, "Look, strangulation," he talks in French.

"Strangulation, pardon? Comme ça? Pardon, comme ça? You cannot strangle anybody by straightening your arm." I said, but I always do it and it always works. He said, "Yeah, but ordinary people don't know how to defend themselves. Try it again." And I wasn't really keen on trying again, because I never had anything like that happen to me before until then I said, "Alright, I'll try again." And while I did, I saw that he had his hands completely free, and that he used my strength to strangle me. Not just choke me, cut off my air, but cut the flow of blood to the brain. It felt terrible because something on which I relied, my power and the way I did the technique, suddenly I found the more

I pushed, the more I strangled myself, I blacked out. Not he. And I didn't notice just because it was so perfectly done, I didn't even realize that he held me. I saw him holding his hands, putting his fingers there, but what do I care? I have him in a grip which I was sure will finish him off. And he said, "You are an intelligent man, I must check this knife technique out. But you can see your book is not very good. But it is very interesting." It was two o'clock when we finished.

I arrived home at 3 and my wife was very worried. She had gone to the place of the demonstration, but everything was closed and I wasn't there. I wanted to phone, but what can you do? I didn't dare. I didn't think I could ask to phone. I wanted to phone, I thought of it 20 times, but somehow I felt it was a hassle. I would have to pay him for the phone call. And it's minor things like that that make life difficult. So, I sat there and I wanted to go home and I had to go to school, I was studying engineering then. I had to go to school early in the morning, and I hadn't prepared for my math examination, as I told you. I listened and was interested, but wanted to go home. At the end Kano explained to me why you have to strangle like that, the principle of it. And he told me that he will take my knife disarming trick, and try it out for a year in the Kodokan to determine why it wasn't used. He thought maybe it was too dangerous, or maybe that it won't work, or that it's easy to defend against. But he was intrigued that he had never seen it. It was late at night, half past two. He wanted to go to bed, so he wanted to send me away. And I said, "Can I get a taxi, because as there is no underground, and I need to get home?" "Oh," he said, and the Ambassador's Rolls Royce with the driver came around and took me home. I sat there alone in that auto and decided that it was fun. My wife was still sitting up when I arrived home. She was worried, she hadn't known what to do. So it took me another few hours to tell her the whole story and I had a sleepless night that night.

I forgot about it. It was a nice experience and that's that. Two days later, there's a phone call from the Japanese Embassy telling me that Kano left a letter for me and that the Japanese ambassador would like to see me. I thought, oh, I haven't got time to waste one evening after the other with such business. I saw what I saw and let's be finished with it. But I couldn't dare not to answer, so I phoned. He talked very friendly to me, as if we knew each other ever since, and told me, "Look, Professor Kano has left for London, but will be back tomorrow and he asked me to invite you for lunch because he wants to talk to you. I will be there too." Now this time, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go to lunch dressed in my usual way. So, I went and bought a kind-of tuxedo with a tie, which I never wore again. I didn't like it, dressed like that I was as clumsy as an ape. I thought I must be posh to go to lunch with them. These chaps talked to me as if I were a real guest. They were very polite, they let me sit first and so on. I thought, "What sort of trouble have I gotten myself into?" And then Kano tells me, "Look, I think you're the kind of man who will succeed in bringing Judo to Europe. We have tried three or four times and it was a failure. We have sent Ida, the man you saw in the

demonstration. He started with a big group, and in six months he had nobody, he had to close. We had several other experts try also and it didn't work. I believe that you have the stuff, but you can't go on teaching that junk you have in your book. You have to learn proper Judo." I said, "I have no time to learn anything properly because I am doing my University studies." He said, "We will see to it so that you have the time you need. We will send you to an expert from Japan who'll teach you Judo. And I will see to it that you are formed into a good Judo man. And with his help, after you have been graded, you will start a club. And I will send you four rolls of film where you will see Judo done by me, by Nagaoka, by Yokoyama and Mifuni, and that's the best Judo that has ever been filmed. We will test that trick of yours. If it is really good, you will be the first white man ever to have a Judo trick on the curriculum of the Kodokan. And meanwhile the Japanese ambassador will see to your needs while you're learning Judo, whatever you need, phone him. He will do everything you wish to help your progress." That was how I got into Judo. And on those cinemas there are some very nice things, and there is something very funny there, too. The black belt, first dan, fights the second dan and then you see that the first dan has not a blooming chance. You can see that the second dan does what he wants. And you see this big hero doing everything, then he gets with a third dan and suddenly he is played with. Because at that time, the dans took five to seven years to get and people were really formed, not like now – you get the belt after paying so much and being six months in the dojo. To get the sixth dan, you had to be one in five million people, the best. Now, anybody who goes to a club, in a year or a year and a half, they get to be a black belt. It doesn't mean much any more. A black belt today is a second rate achievement. You can see even the higher grades in the Olympic games, it's the ugliest sight I've ever seen, worse than boxing, worse than wrestling. Both of them are nicer than the Judo performed in the Olympic games. Kano, if he saw that, he would die.

*Why has the quality of Judo gone down?*

Because so long as Kano was alive, he didn't allow Judo into the Olympic Games and he didn't allow weight distinctions. Skill is the final thing. In the Olympic Games you have weight categories. Because, there, like in wrestling, they believe that a lightweight cannot beat a heavyweight. Now they have that weight system which requires a small man fight a small man, never a big one. So you see those fellows using strength to push each other and they don't do any Judo, they do a parody of Judo. It's against the grain of Judo. It's ugly to see and inefficient. And Kano said, "So long as I am alive, Judo won't have weight distinctions and if the day comes that it becomes a part of the Olympic Games, it will become a wash-out. Judo is finished with inclusion into the Olympic games." And, unfortunately, he was right.

*Is the entire body of Judo teaching very different now than it was?*

Completely, even in Japan. Because, you see, the Japanese are very proud of their Judo. But now it's all a question of violent power, which is against the grain of Judo. Judo is a school where you use your opponent's strength and therefore, it's based on moving, not on resisting, not on pushing back against a push. Who's going to push someone stronger and get somewhere? Kano was a tiny little man who could throw any wrestler who pushed him, any time, immediately. And that's the principle, that if someone pushed him, he would sink under him and the chap who pushed would fall over Kano's body only because he's pushing. Kano would come under his hips and help his push. He disappears from under the push so smoothly that the other person goes over without knowing how or why. Nowadays, they push back, and nobody is nimble enough with that tai-sabaki, you call it in Judo – it means the mobility of the hips, turning the back to the front – nobody is nimble enough to do that. They are not trained any more like that.

The real champions, they never fought. They came there to beat you, not to fight you. They were there to show you that you are no match for them and that was the idea. They didn't go in for fighting. One of them would go there to show you that you were nothing, that his skill is so much greater than yours that you have not a chance in a million. In fact, he will let you do whatever kind of hold on him, just to show you he can get out of it. My teacher would lie on the floor and leave his throat exposed and a stick would be put to his throat with two people holding the stick down, pressing the stick onto his throat. Anybody would be dead in a second. He would lie there, and before you knew it, he was out from under the stick, out of their hold. He could do that ten times running and you still couldn't stop him from doing it. And the thing is extremely simple, but you have to have the skill, the stamina to do it. He would do it to the right and the left, anytime he wanted. It looks like a god-like ability, but then he teaches you how to do it. Now any Judo man today if you put a stick to his throat, he will die. (chuckle)

*Are there still people who do teach it in that old style?*

Oh yes, there are some shimizo, old men in Japan, who are just as peeved about this as myself. They look at these young, silly idiots, who are spoiling their Judo heritage, which was unique in the world, and who make out of it shit. There are many people who ...

*Are they only in Japan?*

Well, there are some of my students like Glen in Paris, he's a very small man and he's sixth dan today. He was trained by me and by Kobayashi and he is small. He could beat people three times his weight. And even today, although he is merely a few years younger than I, he still can beat the best teacher in Paris. There are several others like that, but not many. They are dying.

*You were talking the other day about the ki, chi, that kind of thing. I'd like to know what you think about that.*

Ki and chi are the same thing. You better, about ki and chi, ask Chinese people or other Asian people. Because they talk about ki and chi. I can tell you only that Koizumi, when he wanted to talk about it, there was an international congress of Judo black belts in London and I was one of them. There were about 500 there. And we had a special course conducted by Koizumi. And then in the middle of the course, on the fifth day, suddenly he says, "Now I am going to talk to you about the most important principle in Judo training, about the saika-tanden." Some people call it tantien, the seat of chi, ki, or whatever you like, but it's the saika-tanden in Japanese. "But Feldenkrais come here," and he said to the whole assemblage, "I believe he will talk to you about the saika-tanden more sensibly and in a way in which you'll understand. It is something which I feel and know, but which I cannot explain." And then he let me explain that for the people there. And he wrote the preface to my book. The thing is this, when you talk of such matters in my way, nobody will take it for ki and chi or anything you like. You see, most people talk about that as if it's a mysterious kind of thing in the lower abdomen with all sorts of metaphysical meanings and powers. I have no connection with that. And therefore, my way of thinking is actually a useless thing to such people. If you challenge them on that they'll say, "Ah, what does he know? He is only a scientist."

*But this is only a semantic difference, isn't it?*

Oh, no. A semantic difference? No. Ghosts are a semantic difference? Ghosts are something which if you believe in and you are afraid of a ghost, you are afraid of a ghost. You will never go into a haunted house.

*Yes, but you must know ... It's not semantic, but you must know from your practice something, the importance of this, what they call in the language, tanden.*

Of course, I know.

*And their description of it, while it may be ...*

My description of it is only in movement, I am not concerned with any of the other things.

*But does it not come to the same thing?*

No, it doesn't because, you see, in the one, if you say you've got chi, many people would try to be like you and do like you, and if they fail will say, "Oh, I could never get chi." To get chi, you have to possess moral courage, you have to be connected with the higher spheres of things. Therefore, you find that this is an impediment in the learning. (To a questioner) Have you chi?

*I could not say that.*

Oh, therefore, if you can't say it, that's what I'm talking about. You can work 20 years

and you don't show it. You're not sure if you have it or you don't. Because if it's a mysterious quantity, then you must deserve it, you must be a part of an elite group, or you must be born in China. How will you get chi if it's a metaphysical thing that nobody knows what it is? Well, it's a quality like psychic healing, if you're a healer, you're a healer. If you don't heal, you are not. Now, chi is the same thing. Either you've got it or you ain't got it. If you've got it, you've got it. If you ain't got it, you ain't got it (Laughter) It's almost like EST.

*But what you're talking about is different.*

Yes. I told you. In movement, I can show you what chi is, what ki is, on you or anybody else. Can you see that my notions on breathing are different from anything you heard before and you will ever hear? You can see it, you can test it, on yourself, and there is a marked difference between the one and the other, provided that you can make the contrast.

*Okay, for example, in martial arts training, in Aikido, where they have the notion of the unbendable arm or they talk about focusing somewhere, like a couple of inches below the navel and a couple of inches inside the lower abdomen, and then having your weight underside and not being stiff, but not relaxed, but having your attention ...*

Well, I don't know that it's a few inches here and a few inches there. It has to do with the full organization of your body, you can see it in whatever you do. You actually get chi through using the pelvis and the lower abdominal muscles, the strong muscles of the body as a unit concentrated from where all push or pull is issued. The rest of the body and the arms needn't be powerful. It is not a muscle, it is not a point. It has nothing to do with this point, because if it were a point ... Look, if you move your body like that, the point is gone (makes a move to demonstrate, a shift in the center of gravity to outside the body). A point a few inches there, a few inches here, if you go there, you will find that it is full of shit, literally. (Laughter) That point is full of shit. And this is the point of chi.

*So, will you teach us this organization?*

What do you want it for? You don't want to fight. You don't. What do you want?

*Is it used only in fighting or is it a whole organization that is serving you in any other action?*

Oh, of course, it serves me. I believe a dancer is not a dancer without that reorganization. That is why most dancers are half-cooked dancers.

*Why would we go through life without it?*

You wouldn't know it. And nobody would do the amount of work that is necessary to get

it because they will have to change their dancing.

*But people like us can learn it?*

I am teaching you whether you want it or not. The improvement in your movement that you get moving the head free so that the pelvis can produce the necessary power, that's ki. What did Kano do? That's all. He stands there, you can't push him. If he wants to push you, you go wherever he wants. So the mysterious development of chi is efficient use of the equipment that everybody has. It is that question which needs, in order to understand it, a tremendous amount of knowledge. And as usual, it's easier to teach people without teaching understanding, by saying, look, this is it, imitate me. Look, I stand here unmovable. You can't move me. Now push me, you can't push me. If I push you, you move.

Now and then they have you send the chi down to the ground and bring it back up, each way. It is a marvelous technique. But you know in a way, it's interesting that they teach that way because, if the motor cortex is responsible for directing the organization of the body, then to tell someone to send their energy down would cause them to organize their body differently and so their weight would be more difficult to move. But, if you say you send your energy ... how do you send energy here or there, show me any instance where you can send energy anywhere. In our work we can do something with awareness and without awareness, something just purely done in a mechanical fashion and we can also pay attention to making some movement. So I see the concept of ki and chi as an incredible impediment to learning and I see people in classes, Aikido and Kung Fu and whatever, and it's just a struggle. They can never get it. They never get it because the idea of chi or ki is preposterous. How can you get it if it's a point in your stomach? What would you do with such a point? What can you do with it? What change will it make to you? Now, it sounds a mysterious kind of super power that you get from somewhere in the point in your stomach, and that point described properly, is the duodenum lying there and is literally full of shit.

*Your teacher, and Kano, were trained with that notion in a cultural matrix that allowed them to not view it all so mysteriously.*

Oh, certainly. And Kano, when he had already a school where most of people could beat anybody in Japan, he brought a boy that was 14 years old into the dojo and none of those big experts could throw him because that boy had a natural what they called tai-sabaki,

meaning hips moving away. You could never break his balance, he always slid away, whatever you did to him, like a cat. Balance. He was always coming back on his feet, whatever you did to him. And most people couldn't get a grip on him, if you pulled him he was with you, but you could never make his pelvis go outside the feet, whatever you

did, and they were very peeved. They said, look, Judo is no good. He said, you are no good. This chap will be here until you learn to do like he does, or learn how to fight that sort of thing. Only then will you have a better saika-tanden than he. He is better than any one of you, therefore you have to learn.

*If you were to start a Judo school today, would you begin with your work, Awareness Through Movement?*

Well, I can tell you that I have been teaching Judo exactly in the same way. The pupils that have learned with me are some of the best Judo men in the world today with 40 years experience, means old people. Just like in Japan, the older they get, the better they get. It shows you that they have learned the real thing. Because Mifuni fought 20 Japanese champions at the age of 74 publicly.

*Let me ask you this, I want to know more or less what Judo contributed to your current work.*

Quite a lot, quite a lot.

*In Body and Mature Behavior you talked about the position of the person's pelvis while standing or walking, and where the person's head is, and how it's compensated for, and the amount of fear they feel relative to such compensations ...*

Yes. yes. Well, first of all, that is actually in Kano, and I am sure that I meet Kano's views on that as closely as you can put it in the European language, that Japanese way of thinking. Kano and Koizumi, they always agreed with whatever formulation I made. The more we talked, the more we produced another way of putting it, a way sensible to the West.

*Looking at Koizumi's book, he's an incredibly intelligent man ...*

Oh, he is a marvelous. Look, in Japan they gave him eighth dan, though he really hadn't been in Japan for 50 years. He's a very learned and a very clever man and a very efficient man. Koizumi at the age of 80 could do that Five Winds Kata thing (a unique way of sitting up, actually going from Iying to standing and looking like it was done with the body straight) that I taught you. And he was a national coach in Britain at the age of 80, still being only one night a week at home, all the others travelling all over the place, greeting people, teaching, demonstrating, training, and instructing the higher-grade belts. It's very hard work, even for a young man. Koizumi has a little book on Judo, have you seen it?

*I have one.*

Yeah, you see he throws Legget (Legendary British Judo man), and with Legget demonstrates throws. Did you see that he has a little book of exercises, I have it. It's

wonderful. In it you would see some of the things we do, like crossing and uncrossing the legs. You would see this old man open his legs just marvelously. Nobody here, none of the Aikido experts can move as beautifully as he does, or get up with such soft movement. You can see it's a beautiful movement and you can see that he's half-naked, dressed only in shorts so that you see the details of the movement. It's unbelievable because in the pictures, he's 78 years old. The grace of the movement! A grace of the movement few dancers could achieve. And to photograph nude like that so that you see the movement, it's so marvelous, the whole body like one line. It's nice to see. I mean, even if you don't know what Judo is you will just say, look, what a beautiful man, what a beautiful movement.

*What was Kano's contribution to Judo?*

He created it.

*What relation does it have to the older Jujitsu?*

He took out of all of jujitsu those things ... You see, his idea was at that time ... that's a very interesting story in itself, how Judo came to be. You know that the Americans came with the fleet into Japan with very strongly built sailors and marines and arriving in Japan where there were small little people, they were not all samurais. And those American chaps with their weight and strength and build made a terrific impression on the Japanese, so that they felt useless. The Japanese being separated from the world, they thought of themselves as being in the Land of the Rising Sun, as gods. They even have the rising sun on their flag today. And suddenly they found that some big, white idiots came around who were stronger and better fighters and could do anything to them. They were down-hearted, the whole nation. And they tried by cleverness to cheat the Americans, to do anything to win. When they wanted to dispose of one, they would do it. But not by using strength but by strategy and anything was permitted to get results. Because what can you do against an elephant who attacks you? What would you do? Would you consider it indecent to kick his balls? No. certainly not. So you kick his balls and that's that. You are proud of yourself that you did it, because if you didn't, you would be dead. And you know how Karate came to be? MacArthur made it. General MacArthur produced Karate.

*You mean he is responsible for getting it to the West?*

For getting it into Japan. Because, you see, Judo had about 5 million active members in Japan. Counting those people who had done Judo and stopped doing it, there were about 10 million people who were involved in Judo. And so MacArthur thought if they met in clubs, that's the kind of group of people that you could never hold down. Ten million people trained who can fight very efficiently. So the Japanese under the treaty were prohibited from practicing Judo in Japan. General MacArthur prohibited Judo in

Japan. It was like the communist party, you can't meet together to do it. And so to people who were used to a lifetime of practice, for them it was a terrible thing. It was like taking a drunk and taking the bottle away from him. A person who is used to training three or four times a week, doing Judo for a lifetime or 10, 15, 20 years, and who suddenly can't do it, has to do something. So, they started doing Karate. They said, look, we won't do Judo, or use the Judo gi nor the Judo mat, but we'll do atemi (striking). Atemi-waza, only the hitting part. And that will help us actually to fight the Americans directly. And they started making out of that atemi an art. And so gradually all of Japan, all the sum of the Judo people got into training again in this new thing which was not prohibited. So everybody practiced that instead of Judo and therefore many, many people became involved in it. The skill of some of the Judo man was actually put into Karate and they evolved a spectacular fighting art where they could actually fight again with that same Judo principle, but this time, that principle could not be avowed. It couldn't be called Judo. Therefore they did it in a different way so as to do a legal thing and not an illegal thing. For doing Judo, they could be put in prison. And so gradually, Karate became, in a few years with the American occupation of Japan, generally practiced in every club. Where every club had been a Judo club, it became a Karate club. So that's how it became what it is.

*The other day when we were talking, you said that if you talked about ki, nobody would publish it, that they wouldn't want to hear about it. Right, you said that?*

Mmmmm.

*So my feeling is that I would like to talk about it anyway and ...*

It's not that I don't want to talk about it, but for me this starts with the organization of the body. To me, ki is not a thing and not a spirit and not an anything, but the way a body is organized to function and that way in which it functions best. It means that a body can produce with it's weight, with the muscles that it has, with the brain it has, the greatest amount of work possible with a particular organization of that body and that particular organization turns out to be central to the thing we are talking about. It's a complex appreciation of how a human body is made, how it functions: That it has a head that must not be involved in the movement but which must be free, whatever the movement is, to move anywhere and that the lower abdomen must be in such a state that it can do all the things that it needs to do without disturbing the head. The rest of the body and the arms are not to be used to produce strength. And that is the truth. Once you get that, if you do, you can do Judo throws, the most difficult ones; the heaviest person, you can throw him if you get that. But to the people who are keen on mysterious things of ki and chi, this is a complete come-down, and they are not interested. They don't want to listen to it. They don't want it to be like that.

*It sounds like F. M. Alexander's concept of "use" would be a more useful concept than*

*that of ki.*

Oh no, that's not true because his "use" is a limited "use." With his use you can't throw anybody, you can't even throw yourself, you can't roll with that. So that's "use." Movement, motility, you can see and my way of presenting chi was acceptable to Koizumi, a man whose movement was superb and effective until the age of 80, being able to throw anybody, even if it was someone five times his own weight. He was pleased to think that chi's not a mysterious thing.

*I am sure. So will a lot of people be pleased to hear that.*

Yeah, and be able to learn to do it. It's not a question of either you have it or you don't.

*What about equilibrium in relation to martial arts?*

Oh yes. The equilibrium of the martial arts is a very funny one. I can tell you, my mother is a frail, little woman and when she was 84 years old, she lifted me, with my weight, on her hip for a hip throw and it looked completely fake because it is just unbelievable. Because my mother is kind of ... she probably inherited from me, a sort of mind like that. (Laughter) When she saw that people could do Judo throws and lifts, she said, "I can do it," and it took her about ten minutes and she learned to do it. Everybody was watching because it seemed that she was really going to collapse under a weight like my own. She lifted my legs completely in the air, with the greatest ease, not making even the slightest effort of breath. I also have a picture of my sister lifting me and holding me up there. How did she get me there? I have the picture. That picture was published in France and was reproduced in about 20 different papers. Because it looked fake ... a young girl, a little girl lifts a heavy, strong man and lifts him overhead like that in a way that only weightlifters can do – and not the average weightlifter could do it. How do you do that? You say it's done with ki, with chi. Now if I give you anything you want, buy some chi and ki and do it. Get some ki and chi from anybody you like and do it. Now the trick is this, the people who can do it say they have chi. That's the kind of ... to me, that's exactly like saying my mother inherited it from me. It is putting the horse behind the cart.

So the equilibrium in the martial arts is a very peculiar, very strange one. You should be able to recover your equilibrium, your balance faster than the opponent and find any fault in his balance and take advantage of that. Now, how do you make your recovery faster than his? He's a human being and you're a human being and your loss of balance must be recovered faster than his, otherwise you cannot control him, and you certainly cannot do anything to him otherwise. Now, again, the general consensus is this: you do that because when you have chi, you can do it. Now I say, fuck yourself, and you can write it there. You can't do it unless you can do it. When you can do it, you can say you have ki. But to get it, you have to learn to organize yourself so that you can recover

your balance faster than the opponent, and how do you do that? Look at the way the eighth dan works with ordinary people or with a second or third dan. Do you see what happens? The chap destroys them and how does he do it? You can't even see it. Why is that? The lower dan attacks and nothing happens. The attacker may be vigorous and strong and nothing happens. Why? Because the eighth dan recovers his balance first, and at the moment the other one attacks him, he is in complete control of his body and he changes and recovers his balance so fast that when the other one makes the slightest movement, he can take advantage of it. Now, the reaction time of people is approximately the same; the reaction time of the nervous system is similar from one person to another, within quite narrow limits unless the person is ill-formed. Therefore, what can be done, the recovery, the re-organization, is only a way of linking that part of you which sees and hears and listens and feels. With your way of moving your pelvis and legs in order to be coordinated, there must be no waste of energy, no waste of work, no waste of push between the head and the spine and the pelvis. So that again shows you that there is an organization of bones and head and the link between them is so organized that you can move fast. And when your organization is superior, then the reaction time is of no consequence. The neurological reaction time is the same for you as for him, but you organize yourself faster, therefore, you can recover balance faster than he can, therefore you beat him. And in Judo, that's the thing that is really taught and done.

If you can compete for 16 rounds it means you and your opponent are almost equal. And then if by chance one gets tired, you then get in a few bangs and win. I bet that if I present you a boy of ten, whether or not you know Aikido or Judo or anything, you will beat him in less than 30 seconds because you just lift him and throw him on the floor and break his neck. Therefore, when you are superior in strength, to that degree, there is no question of ki, you are just superior. A dog has very little trouble killing a cat. If he only succeeds in getting him by the neck, one throw and the neck is broken. But you have never seen a cat destroying a dog. A cat can't do it. A cat will scratch out his eyes and that's what he does. When you neglect the weight, then the organization is the one and only thing that counts. When the body is organized so that you can move better and faster than your opponent, it's not a question of competing with him.

Kano showed that there are at least ten distinct grades of quality. Because a Mifuni would never be beaten by a fifth dan, it's inconceivable. A Mifuni would take a fifth dan and just throw him about but not compete with him. The chap would say, how did you do it, and he would throw him again and again for about ten minutes and the chap would never know what was happening to him. Koizumi would throw 50 people like that one after another, and they'd get up and ask how he did it. He'd say, look, I did it like this, and throw them again.

So you see, to me ki, like everything I do, is a concrete thing which can be taught and

learned and which is common to every human being provided the man is willing to learn and he is a normal person, meaning he has no real defects. But even with defects, you can learn to do it.

(To Charles Alston) You can feel that when I threw you I was not pushing with a lot of strength, but somehow using your skeleton and the way you stand. To teach that, first you demonstrate putting too much into it, then too little, and then something in between. I could feel it. You can feel it. That's the kind of thing that I consider to be ki, that I can teach anybody. But if it is taught in a limited way, it will function only in that situation. To transfer that kind of limited learning to other things is a long job.

*So you're saying that the mystical conception people carry around with them about ki is unnecessary. And that you don't need it.*

I think that organization is necessary, otherwise you can't do it. But it is not a thing which – look, if ki were a spiritual quantity the way the psychic people may think, then suppose I have plenty of ki and I want to bestow you the ki. I somehow transfer to you some of the power, then you can do anything. You see? That's the idea. I think that idea is complete nonsense, but people like Kano have taught Mifunis and Nagaokas and Yokoyamas and all sorts of extraordinary people who were looked upon as god-like. That I can understand, and that I can teach you – not as well as Kano himself could, but not by half as much worse, because he is dead and I am alive. (Laughter)

*So these organizations are hierarchical, and in the old days of Kano, the black belt was actually a designation of each order of organization (psycho- neuro-muscular).*

Oh yes. I have the film that I told you about in which we have from first dan to the seventh. You can see that the difference is such that every time a higher grade goes against a lower grade, it looks incredible. The higher ranked man who looked unbeatable and so fast against a lower grade than him when he goes against someone one grade higher than him, he is the underdog. That higher rank throws him as much as he wants every three seconds. Whatever the higher rank does, the other one falls. And whenever he falls, the higher rank holds him and does an arm lock, or strangles him and can just do anything he likes, just like with a baby. And then this chap is, say, fourth dan, and here comes the fifth dan who makes out of him what? Just as if he wasn't there, again, throwing him, the one who looked unbeatable a little earlier, in the space of a minute, 20, 30 times. He gets up and he's on the floor again. And the final dan, the seventh one, doing it to the sixth, that is a real extraordinary thing, because all the others do more or less work, but with these two, the seventh dan is doing it entirely in movement. He never stops to throw, he doesn't stop like they do nowadays, the silly asses, pushing each other. It never stops. He moves, moves around, and in the movement, he throws him. He never stops to do the throw. And that looks perfection itself, god-like. And the other chap can't do a thing. Now what can the other chap do? If he doesn't move, he

gets thrown; so he moves. So they move all over the place, and each movement is a throw. Each movement is a throw. But on the tatami, they are in every corner. All the others throw somebody in the middle, but this seventh dan throws him in that corner, and that corner, in the middle, and there's always movement. And in a minute they go through about 40 throws so fast that you don't know where they come from – you could see it afterwards in slow motion.

The question of what and how to produce change in the neuromuscular organization of a person and what it means to do so is a very difficult problem. You cannot examine the brain, you don't know what goes on in there. You can only judge the outward actions. Now in Judo or in Karate or in Aikido, the problem is simple. The problem is only whether you have a good teacher or a bad teacher. A good teacher will prepare you. He will give you three opponents, for instance, for a first degree black-belt grading test. The teacher will present the student with an orange-belt, a blue-belt, a green-belt to beat and if he does that efficiently, not by mucking about three hours ... But if he in three minutes beats every one of the lower belts, which means he is superior to those people in skill, the teacher will take one brown-belt, not one of the best, but a brown-belt, and have the student try his skill. And if he can in a short time defeat this other brown belt too, then he will have no hesitation of promoting him. And the incredible thing that happens is that once he is promoted, the first time he puts on his black-belt, he can beat any of those people that he previously had to compete with in a quarter of the time and do it regularly. The fact that he has been publicly acknowledged to have made the grade creates in him his own self-assurance. He has grown in his own eyes and he now has greater liberty to judge the opponent and see whether he can beat him or not. He doesn't compete any more with those whom he previously had to struggle with. He beats them. So he must certainly be a higher grade. Now if the teacher is good, he brings the person to a level of skill and self-assurance so that when he puts him to the test, he has a great chance of succeeding. The bad teacher will just put him to the trial, in a contest, and if he is beaten by a blue-belt or a green-belt, it will take him another year or two before he can win a contest again with the same low-grade belts. Because he is doubting his movement now. Therefore he is stiff, he is not free to move, his movements become much slower, much jerkier, too late, always hesitating. "Should I do it, shouldn't I do it? Is it a good time? I don't want to fail again." Like you saw Frazier in the last bouts he had. He lost though he was infinitely better than his opponent. He lost only because he was beaten before in earlier fights, because they knocked out of him the idea that he can win.

This is not a simple thing, the idea to win. You find that the fellow's movement becomes clumsy, that he misses opportunities, just because he is not free to look at his adversary. To beat somebody by skill, you must see when it can be done and when it can't be done. Skill doesn't mean that you force your head through the wall. Therefore, a good teacher will do this: once he has tested the man successfully, he will teach him

important things in the next few days because the man is free now to learn them. The teacher will teach the student things to make sure that he is never beaten by an inferior man. And how can he make sure? He will take a strong man and will tell this chap, this new black-belt to play with him and be taught how to escape. That means this strong chap will hold you and you learn how to get out. Therefore, the strong one doesn't really hold the chap full strength, and so he learns with somebody of whom he is really afraid. He becomes acquainted with him and sees how he could escape because he can see things which he couldn't before. After that the next time he will say, hold me seriously, and he will still get out. After that, the teacher will continue to guide him. Many of them become so beautiful to watch after they've been graded. Within the next week or two, they will beat people that have always beat them before. Those of the same grade who beat him before now can't do it. Now that is a new learning. He improves his skill to the point that in a year or nine months, the teacher can give him another trial, choosing the opponents for him with the likelihood that his skill will be effective and that he will beat them. And for the others who he beats, there will be no harm because they are supposed to be beaten by a higher grade. So to them it does no harm, but to him it does an immense power of good. Therefore you see Kano was a very learned, clever man, who organized that thing like that so that the real Judo man can fight every real grade in the Kodokan. He is a master in his grade and people below his grade, he doesn't have to compete with. He just beats them. He can teach them. And therefore, he will let himself be thrown in order to teach them, because he knows he has nothing to defend, his honor is safe.

So therefore if your question is a particular question, about Judo, Aikido, and other things, you have your full answer. But if you want to see the general thing in say, mathematics, then again it depends on the teacher. If the teacher is clever and he has taught you, say, matrices, he will present you a problem which, knowing what you have accomplished and how you learn, you are likely to solve. The solution will necessitate you being quiet, reposed, and relying on your skill of thinking. If he presents you with a problem above your head, you will fail and the next year, you will probably be one of the worst in the class, and a year later you will give it up altogether. You will say you are not mathematician. If you have a teacher who wants you to learn, then you learn and grow and grow all the time. If you have a teacher who wants to show you what a good teacher he is, he ruins most of the people. Only the one or two may succeed in spite of the bad teaching, but the rest of the class will be poor mathematicians. They won't be mathematicians. Now you can do that with everything. Therefore, when you talk about levels in the neurological way in the system itself, you know there are levels because they have been described by Jackson. The spine can do all or nothing, no gradation. Therefore, you need the other centers which will make this less jerky. The levels are hierarchical. And now that one level is attained the system will never stay there because once this level is good, you can achieve even better gradations, and even richer ...

*Once you achieve a certain level, is it ever lost?*

Oh, yes, it can be lost, always. That chap that has won a dan and you present him that same day with people with lower grade belts that are stronger, better and heavier than him, and if they beat him and if he is beaten four times running, he will go away from the club and never finish his training and think he is no bloody good. Any trauma, any task you or someone else puts to you above your ability will destroy you.

So that's there in everything, the neuromuscular levels. The hierarchies are as clear cut developmentally as they are with a good teacher in Judo or in kendo or in Aikido or ... mathematics and physics.

*Interview by Dennis Leri with Charles Alston, Mia Segal, Robert Volberg, Frank Wildman, Anna Johnson and Jerry Karzen assisting during San Francisco training in 1977.*