

If you guys don't find this boring... more stories about my Sensei:

Funamoto Sensei taught us the importance of Zanshin in Kendo. Yes, Zanshin is very important in Kendo. In fact, it is so important that it sometimes doesn't even matter if you actually hit the target or not. Kendo, like any competition, is officiated by human beings. Mistakes are made. I've won many points and lost many points that never actually hit the target.

Sensei told me that he once lost a point when someone did such a good Zanshin that his Do was never even touched. The guy had hit his OWN Do in order to make the cracking sound of the Do. The Do was so loud and convincing. The Zanshin "sold" the point to the officials.

When I was first told this tale, I couldn't believe it. I still am skeptical about it being true, but hey it's a good lesson for students to do Zanshin. Even if you do not hit anything, you can still get a point if you perform good Zanshin.

We would often perform Kendo demonstrations hoping to attract more students to the art. Sensei would always travel to do these demonstrations. I am not a big believer in them since we rarely ever did get students through these demos. He still enjoyed doing them though. We went to a lot of crazy places together to do them.

We've done demonstrations at Chinese Buffets, high schools, outdoor gardens, cafeterias, and parking lots. See why I didn't like them? The main attraction was seeing the old man lay waste to all of us youngsters. People were very impressed with that.

One demo was in a kick boxing arena with about 3000 people in attendance. There was musical kata, people pretending to be salad shooters, masters having students break cinder blocks on their genitals, Ninjas doing cartwheels and throwing rubber knives, and you can't forget the guy who broke wooden boards with his sheer spirit. Everyone wore colorful Gi except for the Ninja who wore black Hanes sweatsuits. This all took place in between kickboxing demos and some guy from Thailand who claimed that his tibia and fibia should be outlawed since they were deadly weapons. He promptly broke his own leg trying to challenge a Louisville Slugger.

I was young and frustrated so this was all too much for me, but my Sensei was amused. I never understood why he never got angry or impatient. I told him that we don't do any fancy tricks to impress the crowd with. He corrected me by saying that our fancy trick will be to display reality. Speed and precision with no choreography. He was certain that this would impress everyone.

We were a big hit. Little kids came and asked for our autographs. We went to eat Pizza later. He proclaimed that he loved pizza then promptly demanded that we order a pizza with peperoni, green peppers, mushroom, sauce and no cheese. Until that day I never knew that the old man hated cheese. I wondered how he could love pizza and not like cheese. We should have gone to KFC.

I asked him if he could break cinder blocks on his genitals. He never did answer.



Yutaro Matsuura