

perfection as possible and using a small piece of leather to wipe off any fat and residue from the skin penetration. Later, I realized the tedious task of handling such fine needles (he usually used needles of 0.14mm in diameter) was aimed at developing my sensitivity and dexterity. Prior to sterilizing them in the autoclave, the master himself then sharpened each needle manually by grinding it on a small oilstone. He wanted to keep the needles in the best shape for the patients. He performed this work as a sort of daily ritual or spiritual ceremony. Eventually, I began sharpening my own needles everyday and after about two years became very good at it. However, during the entire 10 years of my apprenticeship, the master never once let me sharpen his needles. After I had graduated from acupuncture school, passed the national exam, and received my acupuncture license, the master let me make house calls to certain patients. I was only 21 years old — much too young in the eyes of most Japanese patients to be trusted as an acupuncturist. But once they received treatment, they were convinced of my skill.

After five years of apprenticeship, I felt confident enough to treat almost any kind of ailment and patient. However, I was still very young to be an independent therapist. So, I continued to work under Dr. Ohmura for another five years. Meanwhile, I continued studying medicine not only in Japanese but also in English, hoping that I would someday go abroad to promote my Japanese-style acupuncture and moxibustion. In 1981, after 10 years of apprenticeship (and treating more than 60,000 patients) I went to Canada and established Toronto's first Japanese acupuncture clinic.

Kokubo Junzo, LAc graduated from the Tokyo College of Acupuncture and completed ten years of internship under Dr. K. Ohmura, a renowned Japanese acupuncturist. He is licensed to practice acupuncture in Japan, and has been practicing in Toronto since 1981. He has appeared on Global TV and CTV, and has also been a guest speaker at the medical department of the University of Toronto.

How to Perform Magic

by *Takamatsu Bunzo*

It has been over 25 years since I started this business. For many years, I kept myself busy improving my abilities while at the same time making living. For the last two or three years, my practice has been very busy, averaging 30 patients a day.

Outwardly, it has been steady gradual progress; inwardly, it has been constant struggle. What I yearned for most was an acupuncture mentor with whom I could consult when I had questions, doubts, and worry. I needed a mentor especially when I lost my self-confidence. I often wondered how other people built their self-confidence. My way of enhancing my skills was to read and re-read books, and occasionally, to participate in workshops. Workshops were rare opportunities when I could observe masters and other well-trained acupuncturists. It is not hard to imagine that one could build up his/her confidence by observing teachers in actual practice with actual patients everyday, as well as sharing the time and space with them. I think confidence is contagious.

The late renowned teacher and practitioner Dr. Nagano Kiyoshi once told me an acupuncturist should develop his or her own treatment strategy by the age of 40. At over 50 now, I still don't have one. However, I have formed my own treatment style. In fact, the more comfortable I have become with my own style, the less often I find myself attending workshops, which is very understandable because one does not get the same results as someone just by imitating their style. It takes time to assimilate and internalize a new approach. There is a reason we call our profession a medical "art." As in any art, we eventually develop our own style.

I wanted to describe my style, but have found out it is impossible to do in words. While I talk to a new patient, a treatment plan forms in my mind. The process is quite intuitive and hard to explain. The important thing for me is whether it works, and it usually does. My task is to keep this intuition sharp. Needless to say, maintaining good health is essential. Besides a healthy diet, I do a few things to keep myself in shape. Every morning upon waking, I do a type of do-in (Taoist exercise) that I learned over 30 years ago

in a Japanese fasting center. I add some yoga and stretching to it. Afterwards, I swing a four-pound bokken (wooden sword) 200 times. As of this year, I have been adding meditation, which I think is going to be critical. My observation is that what patients really want from us is the ability to tell instantaneously what's wrong with them and fix it on the spot. In other words, they want magic. We are able to perform magic every once in a while. The only difference between the masters and us is that they can perform it more constantly. Intuition is essential to the performance of our magic.

Masters like Sawada Sensei, Fukaya Sensei, Manaka Sensei, and Nagano Sensei were all very intuitive. I used to think they were just born that way. Now I think there is more to it than that. Another factor common among them is that they are very knowledgeable. Before they became intuitive, they must have studied a great deal. It's obvious from their writings. Intuition, considered primarily a right-brain function, seems to be developed through the hard work of the left brain. However, I have observed another important factor. What drove these masters to study so hard? I believe they had either a very strong desire to heal their patients or a tremendous joy in what they did. In other words, as long as I have the passion to help my patients, I love doing it, and keep on working on it, there is still a chance I can become like these masters.

I said I wished for a mentor. One can look forward to the day when he/she excels his/her teacher. Since the teacher is also improving, this usually doesn't happen. Yet, one can say that it is easier to go forward when you have what you are striving for right in front of you. In my case, I establish my frame, break it, and go on to establish a new frame that is a little greater than the last one. I just keep repeating this process. It is not easy, but I am enjoying it, and my magic has just started.

Takamatsu Bunzo, DOM, LAc, graduated from the Kototama Institute, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, in 1982. He has been practicing in Dallas, Texas since 1988. His practice consists of acupuncture and moxibustion with some Sotai therapy and macrobiotic counseling.