

# SHIHAN JAN DE JONG, 8th DAN: 50 years "only doing what I enjoy doing.

By LES PEREIRA

ALMOST INEVITABLY, the first question put to prominent Martial Artists in magazine articles deals with their initial motivation. Interestingly, seldom is the continuation of training questioned. While for many the Martial Arts may be a hobby, a method of protecting oneself against the increasing violence that surrounds us, or just an opportunity for socialising (all of which are equally valid), for some it is far more. Not simply a way of life, the Martial Arts offers a way in life. One man who has spent his life studying this way was recently honoured in a celebratory dinner by friends, students and dignitaries wishing to show their respect and admiration, and to pay tribute to the man and his achievements. People of diverse backgrounds, varying professions and different generations converged on the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club in Perth, Western Australia, recently, to celebrate 50 years of professional teaching by Shihan Jan de Jong (O.A.M.).



*De Jong Sensei (right) plying his lifelong trade. Initiated into Martial Arts training at the age of seven, his first role as a teacher was instructing fellow members of the Dutch resistance movement during the 2nd World War.*

The guests, all of whom have had their lives touched in some way by Shihan de Jong, included members of the legal profession, education, the medical profession, housewives, engineers and tradesmen. Distinguished guests for the evening included Mr Jim McGinty (Minister for Housing, Construction, Services and Heritage) and Mr Brierley Bailey (the National Secretary of the Australian JuJitsu Association), of which Shihan de Jong is the President and the National Director of Coaching.

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Sensei Daryl Cook, announced the

arrival of Shihan de Jong who entered the hall, accompanied by his wife Margaret, to a standing ovation. During the course of the evening Sensei Cook introduced a number of guest speakers who had been asked to share some of their experiences and personal insights of the guest of honour highlighting various aspects of his personality and his approach to life and the Martial Arts. Anybody who has had the privilege of spending some time with him will know of his keen sense of humour and would have appreciated the often amusing narratives.

Sensei Peter Clark and Robert Hymus, well known to many of those who have sampled a de Jong seminar, have studied under the Shihan for nearly 20 years and are two of the only three students of de Jong who have attained the rank of Nidan (2nd Dan), opened the evening. Sensei Clarke outlined Shihan's personal history from his initiation into the Martial Arts at the tender age of seven, his first role as a teacher instructing fellow members of the Dutch resistance in the 2nd World War, the return to his native Indonesia and his part in the Dutch-Indonesian war of independence and eventual acceptance into the aliran (stream or style) of the Suci Hari (Pure Heart) Pencak Silat - no mean feat since several members of the aliran had vowed never to cut their hair until Dutch control over Indonesia had ceased.

Sensei Clarke recounted Shihan de Jong's attainment of the equivalent of sixth grade in Suci Hati, his early years in Perth, the opening of the first school in 1952 and its growth to nine separate branches around Perth.

With Shihan de Jong's international reputation the Hay St dojo is almost a mecca for Ju-jitsuans around the world, with regular visitors from Switzerland, Denmark, Holland and England, as well as some Pencak Silat practitioners also from Switzerland.

Sensei Robert Hymus, who along with Sensei Hans de Jong, assisted Shihan de Jong in his duties as Advisor and Chief Instructor to the Australian S.A.S. Regiment, related one of his experiences assisting the Shihan teaching Prison Officers at the maximum security prison in Adelaide. The observation which Sensei Hymus shared was not of the Shihan's martial ability (although that gave the scenario for the story), but of his compassion.

Glimpses of "the early days" were given by Mrs Adrienne Campbell (the first lady ever to grade to instructor level of Black and White Belt in the school) and Mr. Nardino Sorbello (an internationally recognised artist and driving force behind the Cohunu Wildlife Park), who has the distinction of having joined the school in its opening year (40 years ago).

Sensei Debbie Clark and Guru David Jennings both described Shihan de Jong's encouragement, advice and support for their separate ventures - Sensei Clark the Women's Self-Defence branch of the school and Guru Jennings' study of Indonesia and its culture. Guru Jennings coaches the school's Silat competition team for international and world events.

Several presentations were made, including a statuette from Sensei Per Brix, of Denmark, for whom Shihan de Jong has held several seminars over the last three years. The presentation was made by Sensei Soeren Markussen, one of the senior Instructors at Sensei Brix's school, who spent three months in Australia training at the school. Mr Justice (Paul) Seaman, himself an Ikkyu under Shihan de Jong, presented an engraved glass plaque utilising the school's logo which depicts Shihan de Jong's teachers, the Saito brothers, in action. A collage of photographs from the September '92 seminar in Melbourne was sent by John and Sue Beckman of Melbourne. .

An indication of Shihan de Jong's reputation and standing on the world stage may be gained from the number of telegrams and cards from wellwishers both interstate and overseas - Singapore, Japan, France, Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Holland....

Those who know Shihan de Jong and have benefited from his teaching will know how well deserved he is of a celebration to mark these past fifty years, and indeed, to paraphrase Sensei Seaman" ... how privileged we are to have a world class Master available to us here in Perth".

But the last words should go to the guest of honour who, in thanking everybody, remarked "I was only doing what I enjoy doing".

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