

Xin Qi Shen

2020 Spring

Master Sid Woodcock



Sid - Dave

As I was training at Dave's dojo, there were often comments about Aikijitsu master Sid Woodcock, one of Dave's teachers. Dave studied with Sid for quite a while. Sid taught in Richland WA and was somehow connected to Hanford Nuclear Plant. Dave would travel weekly to study with

him to learn his art of Shinobi Gumi Aikijitsu. (*I've heard it called by other names but can't remember them. Shinobi (忍び) was a covert agent or mercenary in feudal Japan*)

I heard that Sid was a true master of the art and was amazingly skilled. Dave said he knew the entire curriculum of Aikijitsu and was probably the only Caucasian that did. Dave showed me a picture of him that looked like a Marine soldier. There was another semi-blurry picture that showed Sid talking with a group as he was breaking someone's arm. (*story about this later*)

Well, one evening Dave came to class and pulled Chuck and me aside telling us Sid was in Seattle and consented to teach a small, trained group. Since Chuck and I were Aikido shodans (*black belts*) it would be great for our training, also to have us in class as ukes. The classes were to be Tuesday and Thursday nights, were we interested? WOW! Definitely. And . . . Dave's dojo didn't have any mats, just hard wood floors.

I was so looking forward to meet this master and learn real Aikijitsu, the parent art of Aikido. The day came and there were 5 of us warming up for class. Dave, Chuck, Me, Jack Love, and uncle Don as we called him.

The door opens up and in walks this overweight, Santa Clause type guy. My first thought was, "this can't be him". I was totally not impressed since a master should be in perfect physical shape. This guy didn't look anything like the picture I remembered.

After changing into his gi, he comes down and starts class. After just a little stretching he points to me and says, "Attack me anyway you want, but make it real." (*Later he told us if we didn't do a real attack we might get hurt*) Going through my head at the

time was thinking that he couldn't move that well so I shouldn't try to hit him. Instead, I decided to get him in a choke hold and force him back. (*keep in mind I was 19 at the time*).

The second I grabbed him I heard this big roar, he seemed to grow in size (*he inhaled*). My head snapped back and as I looked up, I swear I saw a huge bear about to pounce on me. My body froze, I wasn't able to move. This was just like the cartoons where you're running in place getting no where. My body started shaking and the next thing I knew was Chuck and Dave grabbing each arm carrying me over to the bench to sit down.

Sid came over and did some massage and nerve techniques, then apologized. He said he was out of practice and didn't want to make me that sick. I sat there as he went through the rest of the students dealing with their attacks using various sounds.

When Dave attacked with a punch there was a growl and bark sending Dave heading for the door. Jack responded with recoiling, he thought he saw a snake. Chuck dropped, ducking to the ground. This is Kiaijitsu, one of the branches of Aikijitsu. He called it an old man's crutch.



John Woodcock-Me-Chuck-Sid-Dave- Jack

I was use to the Karate and Aikido basic kiai but nothing like this. I had read of old jujitsu masters that were able to make birds freeze and drop out of the air. (*E.J. Harrison's Fighting Spirit of Japan*) Or cause people to go unconscious with sounds, bring them out of being knocked out with sounds. Though I didn't completely believe it, I didn't disbelieve it either. Wow, this was real! Sid was the real thing.

HISTORY

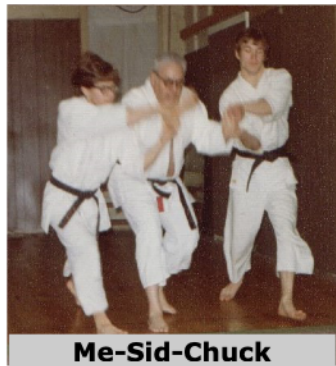
Sid claimed he learned the art in the Tri-Cities area of Washington. One of the children he played with was Japanese. One day his friend asked him if he was interested in martial arts, answering yes, his friend told him that one evening he should visit this one house in the neighborhood. It was an Aikijitsu dojo and the sensei said it was OK for him to come and visit.

Sid went to the house and knocked on the door a few times. No answer but he heard some type of commotion inside. He opened the door to see a group of men working out. A couple of them came over, grabbed him, and threw him out. He went back again and this time they roughed him up and threw him



Sid-Dave-Jack-Me-Chuck-John

out again. Next day he decided he wasn't going to take it so he went back ready to give it a fight. This time, one of them came over and interviewed him. Afterwards he was permitted to start training. He was informed no one uses the front door! You entered through a window in back. Eventually you had to dive through the window and tumble to get in.



The sensei was a master of Shinobi Gumi Aikijujitsu. He had a family in Japan that he had planned to bring over at some point but it didn't happen.

Sid is said to have learned the entire system including: kiai jitsu, hojo jitsu (rope arts), tanto (knife), Ken (sword), nerve techniques, resuscitation and more. He claimed to have traced this art back to the Shaolin Temple.

It's clear Sid was in the military, at some point he became an OSS/CIA officer and operative. While we were studying with him he was very active in Central/South American affairs and would leave often. I was told he was training mercenaries down there. On one occasion he requested us to help work with some 'friends' who had come up from central America. I declined that invitation.

He was known as a counter-terrorist specialist and was a primary consultant after the Oklahoma City bombing. I actually saw his name on a list of the experts brought in to investigate.



Sid Woodcock-Steve Smith-Jessie Glover (Bruce Lee's first student) Dave Harris' memorial

He established a firm called Detonics in Bellevue WA and had designed a special, small yet powerful hand gun. When it came out everyone in Dave's club had to get one except me. Sid had an array of nasty looking knives that were made for him by his friends down south. At one time I was

able to access his website which listed his consulting jobs and recommendations. It was a who's who of different countries, militaries, and official organizations. Very impressive but creepy.

As an operative he was able to hone his skills in the real world. Once in a while as he was teaching he'd describe incidents where the technique came in handy. "This technique is good to take out a century without a sound."

CLASSES

At first the classes were very simple Aikido-like techniques. It

was all very small circle with less flow. Techniques were to disable or destroy the attacker. Throwing them in a way they'd fall to break an arm, or we'd pull back to dislocate a shoulder. The techniques were nice but I preferred the big flowing movements of Aikido. When it came to weapons we mostly worked with a knife at the time. Once he flung a knife across the floor of the dressing room to see our responses. Dave said he'd do that once in a while at his own dojo.

As time went on there were a few things I noticed that started disturbing me. First, if we wanted to get greater detail on something, all of a sudden he'd shift gears and we'd be doing something completely different. After a couple of months Dave added three new members joining our group. Very much beginners but shortly after they joined, he had them believing they were experts.



Sid had a fascinating way with people. During class he seemed to select one member and build them up to the point they thought they were masters of the art. As a few of us were out eating lunch after Taiji class, Sid happened to come into the restaurant and join us. My friends wife was with us who was usually very cold and harsh. Within seconds he had her giggling like a school girl.

As the classes continued I enjoyed them less and started getting the feeling I needed to get out. He seemed to like me but I just didn't like the energy the group was heading in. His eyes always had a cold blueice look. As we got deeper into knife techniques he would go over the proper way to slit a throat and describe the sounds we'd hear. How to do it quietly so no one could hear the person dying. :(

He started bringing in various handguns to class and we started working on strengths, weaknesses and how each was to be disabled. When he started teaching rope techniques, it was the final straw for me. My claustrophobia kicked in, I wasn't going to let anyone tie my hands together or bind me.

To get out of the class gracefully I added another teaching gig that happened to be on the nights he taught. I was grateful for what I learned, but much of the brutal stuff I didn't want in my head. He insisted on it all being 'real'. "If your want to really be good you need to go out and practice." "Hang around bad neighborhoods, walk down alleys dressed nicely." Always carry a throw-away knife so if you injure someone you can show you were threatened. This was all around the late 1970's.



Sid at Dave's memorial