

# Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Society. Membership - \$10.00 Annually  
c/o 5907 Deerwood Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63123

Volume 7 No. 4

July - August . 1975

NEW MEMBERS - Eight new members this issue!...and only the beginning.

Troy N. Baxley,  
Stu Ogan,  
John Beatty,  
Harry Feeney,  
Curtis B. Uhls, Thomas D. Winter Jr., Andrew R. Crichton, Jack J. Owen,

BOOK REVIEW - by Mel Oka

The book is entitled THE PEABODY MUSEUM COLLECTION OF JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS WITH SELECTED PIECES OF SWORD FURNITURE. It is written by John D. Hamilton with the material used for illustration coming from the collection of the Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts. The 8½ x 11 inch book is soft bound and contains 43 plates of about 140 pieces, mostly tsuba. Several plates are in color and several are enlargements. Each plate is accompanied with a description of the tsuba illustrated. Effort has been made to group the tsuba into schools with both soft metal and iron tsuba represented.

This book should not be bought with the idea that it is a definitive work. I think that this book was produced with the intention of illustrating the type of material in the museum collection with an eye to covering as many of the schools of metal working as the collection permitted. For this purpose the book is admirably done. It is obvious that much work and care went into the production of this work. After reading through the book one's appetite is whetted for more! One wonders what other treasures are hiding in the 500 plus pieces in the Peabody tsuba collection. The museum is to be congratulated on a very fine production and the author should be complemented on the even-handed manner in which the pieces were selected. The sharp photographs reflect the high standards and good taste of the author. This book should take its place next to Sasano's EARLY JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS on every collector's shelf. MO

Editors note: A quantity of these books have been purchased by us and are available through the Newsletter. Price is \$9.00 (U.S. only) post paid,

## TOGI HANASHI (Polishing Talk)

By Robert Benson

How often have you looked at a sword and said, wow look at the work in this blade. The smith was really great! Whenever I look at a beautiful sword I think of two things: The smith was really good and the polisher was just as equally good. Here is why I think this way: When holding a sword I can sense the bodily strain, anguish and anxiety that the maker has put into the making of this work of art. While I am aware of all that a swordsmith goes through to make a sword I feel that it is just his conception and the sword polisher is the one that gives it breath, vigor and liveliness to transcend the work of the kajiya.

The people in general, outside of a select few, while well aware of the talent required and hardship involved in the forging of a sword the present state of affairs is that a large number do not realize the skill and persevering application of his efforts necessary for polishing the forged piece of work. On one occasion I was asked: "It really doesn't take you three days to do a sword now, does it?", the person implying that three days is an exaggerated amount of time. He didn't know what to say when I told him that I took three months to do a sword one time and on the average it took about a month. This is for a dait of excellent quality and an excellent polish that is not forced. Any polisher can polish a blade in three days but the outcome is not much more than a shine. I don't know which takes longer - planning what to do or doing it. When you are doing a blade of Juto quality or just an excellent sword you have to be right the first time. This is true in all the steps of polishing. Any amount of metal can be removed but putting it back is impossible. Even the masterpiece forged by the swordsmith with considerable pains, if polished by an inexperienced or unskilled polisher, will not be able to exhibit on the surface its true worth and rank: or, in the cutting ability of a blade, if the blade is polished so that its shape (curvature, etc.,) and blade thickness is destroyed, the cutting ability will be lessened to a remarkable degree. Accordingly, exceptional sword connoisseurs are very critical in their selection of sword polishers to do their work. In the first place, since polishing is a work which is evident on the surface of the sword if the owner neglects to care for the blade and it becomes rusty, the effort of the polisher disappears simultaneously with the appearance of the rust. However, since the sword forged by the swordsmith remains forever it is inevitable that more commotion and fuss is raised over the swordsmith rather than the sword polisher. Accordingly, the work of the polisher is how to manifest the talent of the swordsmith, and as far as swords go, is functioning as a diligent behind-the-scenes worker; however, I am convinced that the role is considerably important. So the next time you pick up a sword that really impresses you keep in mind, a polisher has also given part of himself to bringing out the beauty of the work of art, an aesthetic legacy left to all mankind to protect and preserve forever.

BB

PROSPECTS (cont'd.)

As for the proposed material for the coming NEWSLETTERS - we would like to broaden our coverage in future issues. We need some fresh material on neglected areas such as fittings, pole arms, etc., plus some photographic coverage on occasion. The featuring of eshigata of swords will continue but we need this added coverage in order not to become stagnant on one area of collecting. One area certainly in need of coverage is the area of true and false mei on blades and fittings. There is next to nothing available on this in english and we all must grope around in the dark searching for what we think is worthwhile tidbits of learning in this area. We have had some prospects mentioned along the lines of fresh fitting material and if these prospects pan out, the articles will be very good. If you have any such material or can write a paper on the subject - please speak up and offer your findings - we need them.

The final (next to final) installment of the HAN AND KAKIHAN translation which has been handled over the past ten (?) years by Alan Harvie, will appear in the coming 1974 BULLETIN. The only item remaining to be completed here is an index to the whole thing - and Alan is working on that at present. This job has been a very hard and long job for Alan and we all owe him a great debt of thanks for his many long hours of effort on this project.

RCH

\*\*\*\*\*

TREASURER'S REPORT 1/1/75

|                          |               |                  |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Cash on hand 1/1/74      |               | \$ 468.33        |
| INCOME - Dues.....       | \$820.00      |                  |
| Tanto sales (1974).....  | 350.00        |                  |
| Misc. income.....        | <u>534.91</u> |                  |
| Total income.....        | \$1704.91     | \$1704.91 /      |
|                          |               | <u>\$2173.24</u> |
| EXPENDITURES -           |               |                  |
| NL and Bulletin.....     | \$752.12      |                  |
| Misc. supplies.....      | 270.43        |                  |
| Tanto printing, etc..... | <u>538.60</u> |                  |
| Total expenditures.....  | \$1561.15     | \$1561.15 -      |
| Cash on hand 1/1/74      |               | <u>\$ 612.09</u> |

A remark on Tanto sales - total cost of project (approx.) \$590 with a total sales to date of (approx.) \$630. We still have many copies left for sale and any sold is now profit - so push what you can!

On "Misc. supplies" - some of this is clerical items, but a large part is items for resale such as ink stones, oil, etc., at little profit if any, as a benefit of membership.

Editor's note - the following article is a follow-up on the forging article Ed Dobrzanski supplied for the 1974 BULLETIN.

THE ROLE OF THE MUD USED IN THE FORGING  
OF JAPANESE SWORD BLADES.

BY Ed Dobrzanski

On reading through various explanations of Japanese sword production, one frequently comes across vague or misleading information. A case in point is the use of the liquid mud during the welding and folding processes.

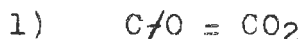
Inami Hakusui, in his book NIPPON-TO, THE JAPANESE SWORD, suggests that the mud is used as a flux, and to control the carbon content. His guess happens to be right, but the actual process is quite complex.

The composition of the mud is given as clay, charcoal powder, and powdered uchiko. Hakusui states that uchiko is powdered limestone. A quick reference to a mineralogy text will show that limestone is mainly calcium carbonate ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ), with varying amounts of impurities such as magnesium and iron carbonates. Charcoal is relatively pure carbon.

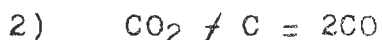
Why is this particular composition chosen? The use of the clay is obvious. Clay is composed of various silicates, which are stable at the temperatures used in forging. Also, its extremely fine particle size makes it extremely difficult for oxygen to reach the surface of the metal, therefore acting as a flux in welding and forging.

The charcoal is used to raise the carbon content of the steel. Here things are not so simple. Although iron and steel heated above  $700^\circ\text{C}$  become good solvents of carbon, experiments have shown that little or no carbon is absorbed if it is introduced in the solid state. It appears that in this process (called case-hardening or carburizing) the carbon must be introduced as a gas.

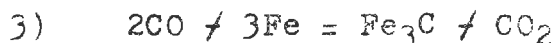
When carbon is heated in the presence of oxygen, it burns to form carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ), as in the reaction:



The  $\text{CO}_2$  reacts with the surrounding charcoal to form carbon monoxide ( $\text{CO}$ ):



The carbon monoxide gas ( $\text{CO}$ ) diffuses into the outer layers of the metal and reacts with the iron ( $\text{Fe}$ ):



### CHICAGO SWORD SHOW -

Don't forget to mark your calendar for OCTOBER 18th/19th in Chicago, Illinois at the O'Hare Inn - Token Study Group's annual show! It promises to be a very super show with the presence of the famous polisher Mr. Kentaro Yoshikawa, and possibly several other noteworthy guests. A flyer will be sent out by TSG prior to the show.

Since many JSS/US members attend this fine show each year, it is planned that we hold our annual business meeting (and possibly a dinner/meeting), perhaps that Friday in the hotel. This would not be anything elaborate but rather a nice evening of good fellowship. **IMPORTANT:** Anyone who plans to attend the show and who would be interested in such a dinner/meeting, please write and let us know your interest. If enough interest is expressed, these people will be contacted individually as to dinner reservations, etc., as would of course be needed in order to plan such an event. Please respond to this right away...write either the NL or Arnold Frenzel today!

One more note of interest, an interview with Mr. Yoshikawa was printed in the Vol.6 No.2 of the BULLETIN (Autumn 1966).

### SAN FRANCISCO SWORD SHOW AND SHINSA -

The Token Kai of northern California will host a sword show and shinsa in San Francisco from July 29th thru August 1st of 1976. Most of the membership has received notice of this event which explains the plans in detail. Anyone not receiving such a notice should contact Mr. Roger Dunn @ Token Tai Kai Committee, 89 Parkside Drive, Berkeley, California, 94705. Roger will see that you receive all flyers right away! **IMPORTANT:** Roger has requested that everyone please return the 'information card' which was included with the announcement right away. This information is desperately needed by the committee so that a sampling of interest can be made and plans formulated! Your cooperation would be greatly appreciated.

### ST. LOUIS SWORD SHOW:-

There is growing interest here locally that perhaps the JSS/US could hold a sword show in this area sometime in the near future. Such a show would be coordinated so as not to interfere or conflict with any of the other sword shows and might be run in conjunction with some other organization (who would be making the actual rental plans). This would need to be thought out and talked over naturally, but anyone who would like to express their interest in such a located show should do so in a letter to Arnold Frenzel. This is a most central location and just might prove to be a very popular spot for such an event. **please write and express your thoughts (as soon as possible).**

### MEETING IN GENERAL -

Word comes in from time to time that other local groups are holding small sword meetings and study sessions. This is great! Please, if you are involved in any such events please send in a brief report on what has taken place for general interest in the NEWS LETTER.

## MEMBERSHIP DRIVE -

Apparently there are many collectors around who have a passion for swords but know not where to look for information and learning. With this in mind, an ad is to be run in the SHOTGUN NEWS in the very near future, advertising our existence and offering membership to any serious collector. Other sword clubs will be asked to let our name be known (since many of us already belong to any active club just to broaden our learning). If this is successful other ads in other types of collector papers will follow. A significant jump in membership is expected which means more working cash in our treasury which we hope to put to work for us in the way of future projects.

One problem has turned up with regards to rounding up potential members. We did not have a formal 'application for membership' to give to such parties. Thanks to Clarence Siman of St. Louis, we do have such an application available now as Clarence has had one printed. The form is available upon request to anyone who thinks that they would put them to use. SEND YOUR REQUEST to the NEWSLETTER and a number of copies will be forwarded to you post haste.

## 1975 BULLETIN -

The time for gathering articles to be included in this years annual BULLETIN is once again upon us. PLEASE send all such material (and you intend to submit something later, advise us of that) to the NEWSLETTER pronto....this is very important so that this years annual can be typed, printed and mailed before the end-of-year holiday rush begins. Your cooperation is appreciated!

## SUPPLY SERVICE -

Feelers have been put out to try and locate several suppliers in Japan who could give us either a cheap retail price or wholesale price on supplies. One contact, Mr. Kiyoharu Omino (who runs a sword shop and polishing service), has given us some reasonable prices on fitting kiri boxes, purple shirazaya bags, sageo, etc., and has said that he would cater to us (unfortunately not for polishing though).

With this in mind, your wants are what we must need to know. It would be best to order such things in quantity and then let us act as a distributing point. So let us know what you want us to handle.... and...if you know of any stateside retailer, advise us of that too. We would handle such supplies more as a service to members rather than on a profit making basis since the volume handled is too small to do much 'profit making'. We can do this as long as everyone does help out by buying the profitable items such as our TANTO book or any other such society projects. It is thru these projects that we help bolster our treasury working-power. So again, express your wants in the way of a supply service and we will see about accommodating your needs.

FREE BOOKLET OFFER -

A very fine booklet entitled, THE BUSINESS OF UNDERSTANDING JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES IN TODAY'S WORLD, by Mr. Michael Berger, distributed by the PBS television series "THE JAPANESE FILM", published by the Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley, in cooperation with the Japan Society of New York - has been made available to us for our membership. Although this booklet acts as a review of the films in this series, it goes into a very worthwhile and learned analyzation of Japanese thinking vs American thinking in an attempt at developing a better understanding between two extreme cultures. It is truly an education to read and deserves to be given your attention.

We have a limited number of copies available and they will be sent on a first come-first served basis. They are free, but we ask that you enclose 50¢ (cash or stamps) to cover handling and postage. Send your request for a copy to the NEWSLETTER. A copy will also be placed in our library.

WANTED ITEMS - (a free service available to society members)

Wanted: good 1st class GENDAITO. Also buy or trade for blades by Chikuzen MORITSUGU and a MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI daito.

Contact: Mel Oka @ 460 Bryce Ave., Los Alamos, N.M. 87544

Wanted: Katana of the MARUTA UJIFUSA SCHOOL of Satsuma Province. (UJIFUSA, YASUSADA, ETC.).

Contact: Charles Whitney @ 42 Woodmount Ave., Toronto, Ontario

Wanted: Tsuba in daito size, preferably in shakudo nanako, signed KOUNSAI FURUKAWA with kakihan. I will trade polishing for this works.

Contact: Bob Benson @ 1013 Bernalillo Pl. S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87123

Wanted: I am in the process of writing a book on Gunto. I am still searching for a few types for photographic purposes and would be very interested to hear from anyone who owns (or knows of anyone who owns) any form unusual or unorthodox Japanese swords made between 1868 to 1928. I am in need of obtaining info and/or photographs of "western" style swords, government or private, particularly any prototype or experimental swords. Almost all of these will probably be in the form of sabers, although I am most interested in any other types. Information or history, origin or general description is also needed with regards to these swords. Help from any members would be greatly appreciated. Contact: John Clark

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next issue of the NL is due out around the 1st week of October. Please have any material intended for that issue to the editor no later than the end of September. Thank You.



RON HARTMANN