The instinct for protection against attack—to curl into a ball and cover the head and vitals—was long ago overcome by the upright, relaxed bearing of the first martial artists using a series of studied moves and attitudes to thwart, neutralize, subdue, and control their attacker.

Where did it all start? We don’t know exactly. All civilizations developed sophisticated ways to defend and subdue. The tree of martial arts has many branches; the branches, in turn, split into distinct twigs. For example, the main limb that we call jujutsu came under scrutiny in the Japan of the early 1900s when some of its practitioners, rowdy sailors, used jujutsu techniques to bully and maim others. The Do, or True Way, had gone missing. Judo and aikido promptly arose to re-infuse the concepts of honor and decency into the genre, and did so by simplifying and removing the more lethal attacks on joints and nerves.

I was privileged in the seventies, in San Francisco, to take in a demonstration of some twenty Japanese martial arts, all family-based, and presented, in some cases, by bespectacled older gentlemen who were the heirs, some in the twentieth generation, to the family technique. One sword-master approached a tightly bound sheaf of straw, shaped like a human torso, and with one swipe, cleanly cut it crosswise. It wasn’t nailed down to its stand. Had the sword struck the bale at the wrong speed, it would have been batted across the stage. This was a learned technique. It took generations to perfect.

To investigate the oldest martial art, one naturally turns to one of the oldest civilizations. I once read an account, in a martial arts book, of a great Chinese master who greeted his interviewer by flying down from the second story of his dwelling. The master then went on to absorb direct karate blows to his face, and demonstrated on [the interviewer, the books author]. Dim Mak, the delayed death touch, which he said works through pressure points aligned with the victim astrology. Many Chinese films featured these superhuman feats, especially the recent Ang Lee movie, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. An earlier Lee movie, Pushing Hands, told the tale of an aged chef, also a great tai chi master, and his problems adapting to modern, Western-style Taipei.

North Coasters, [residents of the Mendocino Coast, are fortunate in that they live] in a naturally beautiful area with all the perks attached to it, [including] a handful of intense and rewarding martial art forms [that are] readily available. They all can be found at the Mendocino Recreation Center. Let us sample these self-defense and fighting arts at the Mendocino Recreation Center, all the while appreciating the high accomplishments and rank of each forms instructor.

TAI CHI CHUAN
The tai chi chuan classes taught by Franz Arner [showcase a discipline which] comes from southern China. In 1978, Arner studied with Master Kuo (once Chiang Kai-sheks bodyguard) in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Kuo taught him the Big Yang Style, which derives from Chenman Ching, the master who brought and popularized tai chi in the United States.

Arner, who has the piercing look of a young Albert Einstein with curly black hair and mustache, sports powerfully developed shoulders from his years as a landscape [artist]. He relates, There are now over one hundred different tai chi styles in the country. He got into it for health reasons; he needed a balance to his strenuous vocation moving rocks around. He also studied a
smorgasbord of forms, from shaolin to Indonesian silat got a good foundation.

Ten years ago, Arner met his current teacher, Grand Master Sam Tam, who taught him tai chi and yi quan, a standing internal meditation that features the concept of yielding.

The healing side of tai chi is referred to as chi gung. Arner studies with Master Wong in San Jose, a fifth generation practitioner of reality-chi gung. Arner also teaches the classical Wu Dong sword [technique] (from the legendary Wu Dong Mountain shown in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon). Arner remarks that the sword movements were especially beneficial for women, for their health, and offered aerobic exercise, too.

During Arner’s tai chi class, he moves easily from student to student, lightly correcting their stances and leading them in a series of arm movements. He then takes his students through graceful and powerful pushing hands exercises where one person sends energy and the other returns it without losing contact.

As he moves between students, he carefully corrects their stances, explaining Open the kidney point under the ball of the foot. The chi will come up to the top of the lungs. Once chi is going, it’s easier to hold your posture. He also has his brood pivoting side to side holding an imaginary large ball, so that the tops and bottoms of their arms are engaged. Care Spreading Its Wings, he calls this movement.

At the end of the session, Arner, who disdains the honorific sifu, shows the balletic and flowery Wu Dong Mountain form, his sword swooping in aerial arabesques while his students watch.

**JUJUTSU**

At six-foot-six-inches tall and 250 pounds, with shaved head and ears resplendent with many rings and ornaments, one could wonder why Bear Roberts chose to be a master of the tremendously effective and powerful martial art of jujutsu. Who in his right mind would want to tangle with him?

Featuring an infinite armory of self-defense techniques, Seibukan jujutsu has been Bear’s main muse for the past fourteen years. He has achieved the stratospheric Sixth Dan and Shihan (advanced teacher) rank.

He started his martial arts career with karate, went on to study with the legendary Willem de Thouars in KunTao silat, a combined Chinese, Dutch, and Indonesian form that featured Master de Thouars fighting with monkeys. Bear has also studied ninjutsu for sixteen years, Bujinkan Budo taijutsu with Grand Master Misaake Hatsume and with Tenth Dan Richard Van Donk, and is currently in his ninth year under the tutelage of Julio Toribio, Twelfth Dan in Seibukan jujutsu and advanced belt holder in several other arts.

Bear observes Julios techniques are simple and elegant: We strive to see the invisible, feel the intangible, and achieve the highest possible outcome.

In Seibukan jujutsu, there are 108 techniques and twenty-two principles, manifesting in an almost endless storehouse of knowledge on how to deal with every conceivable attack. In Bears personal philosophy, in place of tori, the thrower, and uke, the thrown, he employs the concept of host and guest. The ju in jujutsu means soft. To Bear, soft and supple will conquer hard and rigid. Built into jujutsu is a healing aspect. The same pressure points that can subdue an assailant can...
also promote the flow of energy through the body.

Bear conducts a very focused class; he takes his students through lengthy warmups that include kicks, punches, rolls, Indian cobra push-ups, and break-falls. An element of Seibukan jujutsu is distraction through atemi (attention-getting faux punches or kicks), enabling techniques to be applied easily. My job is to give you the tools and ability to develop yourself, Bear adds.

By day, Bear is the campus supervisor at Point Arena High School. He is also an events security professional working for As You Like It Security at venues such as the Renaissance Faire.

As Bear takes his students through their lesson, he moves gracefully, sometimes launching himself into an enormous roll. He clearly shows the techniques. His students respond with equal precision while Bear, in turn, praises them, addressing them with the san ending after their names, a Japanese sign of respect.

KARATE
Edward Allen sensei [honorific title for teacher] started his Kyokushin karate studies in 1980 when he was stationed on the USS Warden, berthed in Yokosuka, Japan. An E5 boiler technician, he was introduced to karate by his shipmate, Jagroop. Allen eventually cross-decked to the guided missile cruiser USS Reeves, taking short train rides to Yokohama, where he continued his training under Mr. Keieu and Mr. Yoshioka, attending regular classes as well as summer and winter camps.

He mustered out at Treasure Island, and tried Uechiryu karate for six months, then studied with Alan Dollar in Antioch, California, and finally, Don Buck sensei, a Ninth Dan in Kyokushin karate, in Benecia, California.

Kyokushin, which translates as ultimate truth, is unique in that its founder, the formidable Mas Oyama, became known for his devastating one-punch technique, for being able to flick the neck off a wine bottle with a shuto chop, and for being able to kill bulls with, literally, one punch.

Allen, through a connection with local dentist Ken Baumgartner, relocated to Fort Bragg and went to work for the city’s wastewater plant and started to teach Kyokushin karate. His classes in Fort Bragg and at the Mendocino Recreation Center are brisk, sharp, and of a high order. If a kid doesn’t perform a technique, or loses focus momentarily, Allen sensei makes him do ten push-ups (they love it!).

For safety, during sparring practice, his young students wear mouth guards and special gloves. The class zips along with Allen sensei very much “navy” in his approach, but he’s also very kind and patient. He leads his youngsters through a twenty-two-move kata of punches, blocks, kicks, stances, moving about in a neat formation all over the mat, interspersed with ki-ais (controlled shouts) and osus (which come out sounding like oose, rhyming with moose). The class includes a vigorous game of dodgeball, and ends with more stretching exercises, truly a good workout for the attending girls and boys.

Allen teaches sen, which is dominating your opponent, taking control mentally and physically, then ten no sen, which features total initiative and refrain from violence. Allen says, It is always better to work your way out of a confrontation, but if you have to resort to fight or flight, take total initiative and win.Use enough force so that both of you survive. Do not escalate.
Allen manages to train three to four hours every day. His philosophy is to keep simple, to train with patience and diligence and things will turn out OK no matter what the obstacle.

He is also expert in bo (sticks of different lengths), jo (sticks of different lengths), sai swords (resembling tridents), nunchucks (two short sticks joined by a short chain popularized by Bruce Lee), escrima (roughly two-feet long sticks popular in Indonesia; often made of bamboo or other hardwood), throwing stars, and kendo (a fast Japanese sword form which uses protective gear and a bamboo sword). He hopes to be able to train some students that will go on to become karate champions; to get there faster and better than himself.

At the end of class, Allen sensei and his pupils recite this inspirational coda:

*We will train our hearts and bodies for a firm, unshakable spirit.*
*We will pursue the true meaning of the martial way so that in time our senses will be alert.*
*With true vigor, well seek to cultivate a spirit of self discipline.*
*Well observe the rules of courtesy, respect our superiors and refrain from violence.*
*Well never forget the true virtue of humility.*
*Well look upwards to wisdom and strength not seeking other desires.*
*All our lives, through the discipline of karate, well seek to fulfill the true meaning of the Kyokushin Way.*

Allen sensei smiles at the end of the recitation; I can say that in Japanese, too!

YOUTH AIKIDO
Guy Williams began his martial arts studies in 1987 in Sacramento with tae kwan do. He soon switched over to kali, also referred to as escrima and arnis, an Indonesian form in which the practitioner defends himself with two sticks. In 1995, he began studying aikido with Aikido Mendocino. On one of his travels north, he met Steve Ivey sensei, Fifth Dan, head of the Kihone Dojo in Medford. Guy also spent one-and-a-half years [studying] tai chi in Oregon. In 1997, he started his training in iaido, the naked sword, with Red Sakamoto, a Sixth Dan, also in Medford. When Sakamoto retired, Guy went over to Gene Magin, a Fourth Dan, and eventually hooked up with Masayuki Shimabukuro, Eighth Dan.

This year, Guy was awarded Shodan (first degree black belt) in Icho Ryu aikijujutsu, a form founded by Bernie Lau, combining jujutsu and aikido. Guy sensei also studies in Redding, and owns Second Dans in both aikido and iaido.

His avid interest in all things [related to] martial [arts] led him to Kevin Blok, a Seventh Dan in Yoshinkai aikido, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada who awarded Guy a teaching certificate in control and defensive tactics.

Guy frequently attends seminars, and has recently reinvigorated his studies of arnis with Gene Tucker and Master Jose Bueno. When asked how he manages to keep these four distinct martial arts separate, Guy responds: I just throw them all in one bag and pull out what I need.

In addition to his martial [arts] involvement, Guy is a licensed (in Oregon) massage therapist with a California certificate, too, and has clients in both states who need deep tissue, soft tissue, and related injuries work.

Guy has been teaching youth classes in aikido through the recreation center for several years. He
adjusts the level of training to the individual students, and his kids are very intense and attentive. During this interview, he was showing his pupils a knife kata from the Yoshinkai school. He also plays games with the kids.

Next summer, he'll be advancing to Third Dan in both aikido and iaido.

AIKIDO
The reason that there is a dojo (practice hall) at the Mendocino Recreation Center is mainly due to the efforts of Aikido Mendocino. The group formed in 1974, as the Mendocino Ki Society, affiliated with Tenth Dan Koichi Tohei in Tokyo, and his direct student, Hideki Shiohira of San Francisco. Through the years, the aikido dojo had many homes: in Fort Bragg, up Little Lake Road, back to Fort Bragg, and finally at the Mendocino Recreation Center. Dojo members also taught at Mendocino College before College of the Redwoods moved in, and then at College of the Redwoods; Aikido has been practiced and taught on the coast continuously for over thirty years.

Janferie Stone sensei, Fourth Dan, is the chief instructor of Aikido Mendocino, with about twenty-eight years of practice and teaching to her credit. She frequently attends classes in the city at Mr. Shiohiras dojo in Mountain View, or at the Konko Church in San Francisco. Twelve years ago, Mr. Shiohira, Sixth Dan, head of the Pacific Aikido Federation, with nine dojos, left the Ki Society and returned to the Hombu, (the main dojo formed by the founder of aikido, located in Tokyo). Janferie sensei appreciates her connection with Mr. Shiohira, who, she says, is sincere, yet hard on himself. He keeps challenging himself to attain a higher level.

Other influences on Aikido Mendocino include Pietro Maida sensei, head of the Northern California Ki Society, who lived and taught here for several years in the mid eighties, and Kim Peuser, Sixth Dan, head of the Oakland Aikido Institute, a frequent visitor to his mom in Little River, and, hence, a visiting instructor at the Mendocino dojo. Peuser sensei has brought his entire dojo [to the Mendocino Coast] several times for a weekend of aikido practice.

Since 1989, Janferie senseis other life has revolved around Native American studies. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in that field, focusing on Central American socio-cultural practices, and teaching and writing about spirituality and womens oral, traditional stories. She has studied anthropology and got her masters [degree] in folklore at Berkeley. She spends some seventeen hours a week on the road commuting to her Instructor of Native American Studies job at UC Davis, and hopes, with her doctorate, to be able to teach closer to home and family.

Her aikido teaching is both creative and inspired, and often vigorous and demanding. The techniques of aikido have no bottom; they can be studied and worked on over and over again.

All of these martial [art] disciplines are open to the public. If the reader is curious, be advised to drop in and watch. All the senseis are very sociable and happy to welcome observers, as well as new students.