

“Sensei, what would you do if someone attacked you in the street?”

I was taken aback momentarily as I was quite enjoying my chicken teriyaki. So, how to answer this question coming from this young aikidoka?

In a flash and moment of nostalgia, I recalled when I was first introduced to martial arts around the age of 12, it was instilled in me that I should not tell people that I was training in the arts. This was partly strategic as the element of surprise in an altercation would be an advantage and there was always someone who would want to test your skills.

I was also reminded of a TV series that I watched in the early 1970's (yes – I'm old) about a young Shaolin monk who was taught that when faced with aggression, it was better to walk away but if necessary, it was better to “Hurt rather than maim. Maim rather than kill. Kill rather than be killed.” Something like that ...

Fast forward to today when cowards' one-punch or knockout games are often reported in the media, and back to the young aikidoka's question ...

Well recently I was in a small regional town having a cup of coffee, just hanging around, enjoying the ambiance and watching the passing parade of locals when there was quite a commotion coming towards me.

There was a mass of people running away from a machete wielding young man – all coming my way! As the young man approached, he sliced a few trees and destroyed a metal garbage bin. (Later the locals told me that he was a little high on meth ice – apparently a rare event in town thankfully, else the tourist trade would be disrupted).

If you've ever watched a wildlife documentary when a herd of gazelles is suddenly chased by a lion, the potential preys all turned and bolted away from the predator at the same time. That's what it was like.

But at that moment as the drug affected young man approached me, I had visions of applying a kotegashi on him or some other appropriate technique and saving the local community.

As I related my recent experience to the young aikidoka, he seemed very keen to hear how I'd dealt with the young man and his machete.

"So what did you do Sensei?"

"I ran."

"I ran very fast"

"I think I was at the front of the pack running. Or very close to the front. Yes – my aikido came in very handy!"

The young aikidoka may have been a little disappointed by my answer which didn't have much of a WOW factor. But I was quite comfortable with my response.

BTW – no person got hurt by the machete wielding young man and the trees recovered. And my response to the young man would have been very different had he threatened those I love.