

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 NO.1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1974

TANTŌ

(Japanese Daggers)
by Suzuki

ENGLISH TRANSLATION © JSS/US 1973 - is now available. Prices are as follow (pp.):

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Some Japanese texts (w/plates) are available from Jim Mitchell. Contact Jim for particulars.

Reminder

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MOST 1974 DUES ARE PAYABLE NOW! Please send in your payment promptly. Send \$10 U.S. to Ron Hartmann for one years dues. Make checks payable to the society, in U.S. \$ only. Also a reminder - LIFE MEMBERSHIP is still available @ \$100! We have two life members and could use many more.

Check your membership card for your due date. We have also had a very good response to our membership drive during last year, picking up a good number of new members. Keep up the good work and lets build our club up to a significant membership. A well rounded membership will make for more benefits for all in the way of programs, translations, and learning.

Keep
America
Beautiful



NEW MEMBERS -

Four new members have been added to our membership roster. On behalf of the membership, welcome! New members are:

Douglas McDonough
Laurence A. Barandes

J. S. Naemura
Robert M. Lewert

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Period from 1/1/73 thru 12/31/73

Cash on hand, 1/1/73		\$290.43
Income:		
Membership Dues	\$609.70	
Supplies, Books, Misc. sales	<u>358.51</u>	
Total Income	\$968.21	<u>7968.21</u>
		\$1,258.64
Expenditures:		
Newsletters/Bulletin (incl. postage and printing)	\$439.50	
Misc. expenditures (incl. supplies for resale, clerical supplies, transfer of treasurer office records).	<u>350.81</u>	
Total Expenditures	\$790.31	<u>-790.31</u>
Cash on hand, 12/31/73	\$468.33	\$468.33

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PROJECTED BUDGET - 1974

Treasury Balance as of 2/1/74 after payment of printing and postage bills for our translation (mailing only of Bulletin) - Balance of approximately \$100 on hand.

Projected Income during 1974 - Dues: \$700, Sale of translations: \$? - depends on our "sales staff"...the membership. Income from other sources is nominal, mostly items sold at cost: \$50/-.

Projected Expenditures will be for Newsletters and Bulletins, and will take about \$500 - \$600 this year.

What this report obviously points out is our need for some fast and easy income in order for us to operate in a progressive manner during 1974. Two simple and significant sources of income are possible - prompt payment of DUES and a good response to our translation offer. The initial response (60 copies sold) let us at least pay our printing bills.

Several constructive programs are in the offering for 1974. A book review service plus possibly a discount book buying service looks probable. More translations are in the future - the size of these undertakings again depend on our working power (\$). Our Newsletter is going to be up-graded through the use of better printing methods for our oshigata series. We will again put out six regular sizable Newsletters plus a well-rounded annual Bulletin towards the end of the year. It should be a good year - once we get in the black again - hopefully soon.

Thank You

RCH

NEW ADDRESS FOR JSS SECRETARY -

Mel Oka has terminated his pleasurable several years in Uncle Sam's army and is once again what is called a "civilian". Mel has advised us of his new address, as follows:

FUJIWARA SADAYUKI w/ TEST -

Mr. Benjamin Hazard was kind enough to send in some further comments pertaining to the oshigata of a CUTTING TEST which was presented in the Newsletter Vol. 5 No. 6, page 5. The more precise rendering of the test data is as follows:

Kambun hachi (this number 8 seems to have been inscribed as an after thought and is really redundant with the cyclical dating and thus raises some questions) tsuchinoe-saru (no) toshi (this may also read as bōshinsai in Sino-Japanese rendering) Kūgatsu jūgonichi futatsu dō kiri otoshi. Maeshima Hachiro Tomotsugi (alternate reading Yuji, but Tomotsugi seems the more likely).

Kambun (reign name began 1661) 8 senior-earth-monkey (the 60 year cyclical designation which in the Kambun reign equates to 1668) year, ninth (lunar) month, 15th day (which is in the western calendar: October 20, 1668) cut down through two trunks (that is the cut was delivered between the lower ribs and the pelvis of two bodies).

TEST BLADE (cont'd.)

Maeshima (Maejima is an acceptable alternative, the precise form would have to be ascertained from family preference) Hachiro Tomotsugi. (The signature is terminated with a kakihan.)

BHH

THE MAKING OF THE SAMURAI -

The program, "The Making of the Samurai", was presented at the University of California, Berkeley, on the 8th and 9th of December, 1973. The Program was as follows:

Samurai Class in the Social Structure of Japan: Dr. H. I. Martin.

Home Environment and Child Rearing in Tokugawa Japan:
Dr. G. E. Moore.

The Social Organization of a Selected Clan: Dr. B. H. Hazard.

Furin Kazan, a film on the life of Takeda Shingen climaxing in the battle of Kawanakajima. Superb for armour buffs.

Education and Training in Clan Schools: Dr. G. E. Moore.

Bushido: The Way of the Samurai: Dr. Robert Frager.

Religion in the Life of the Samurai: Dr. H. I. Martin.

(Second day)

Traditional Martial Arts: Dr. B. H. Hazard, Prof. Charles Chess, Dr. Chaote Lin and the San Jose State University Kendo Club:

Iai, Kendo Kata, Naginata Kata, Spear vs. Sword Kata: A first in the United States. Contests: Kendo, one sword vs. two swords, Naginata vs. naginata, Naginata vs. sword (shinai).

Forms and Usage of Samurai Armour: Mr. Ichiro Morita

The Samurai Sword - Weapon and Symbol: Mr. John Yumoto.

Film: Sasaki Kojiro: climaxing in the famous duel between Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojiro.

The lectures were profusely illustrated with slides.

The above run-down was supplied by Mr. Hazard and illustrates what a fine program this was. Richard Mantegani also sent in some comments on the program and verified that it was most enjoyable. A very complete bibliography was also sent along, which will be printed in a future Newsletter. This bibliography presents a good line-up of books related to these subjects and would serve to guide us in our reading selection.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION COLLECTION -

Mr. George Phebus who is with the Smithsonian Institution, was kind enough to supply us with a list of some of the finer blades in the Smithsonian collection. He adds that if any members wish to examine these blades in the future, arrangements can be made by contacting him several days in advance. The list is as follows:

<u>Catalog No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Paper</u>	<u>Size</u>
4133	Sukehiro	Settsu	early 17th c.	Green	W
4134	Tadahiro	Hizen	1624 - 1632	Green	W
T-374-A	Yoshifusa	Hizen	circa 1624	Green	K
277570	Tadahiro	Hizen	18th c.	Green	T
387109	Munetsugu	Wakasa	16th c.	Green	K
95471	Yasutsugu	Musashi	1858	-	T
274831	Masashige	Harima	1797	Green	K
359954	Kanesada	Settsu	17th c.	Green	W
398303	Nobutoshi	Yamashiro	c. 1681	-	W
414180	Shinrio (ryo)	Settsu	late 17th c.	Green	W
398300	Hirotsugu	Sagami	mid 16th c.	Green	W
414189	Hirotsugu	Sagami	1492 - 1501	Green	K (?)
404679	Hisamichi	Yamashiro	mid 17th c.	Green	K
414196	Hisamichi	Yamashiro	17th c.	Green	K
414197	Kanemoto	Mino	16th c.	Green	K
415512	Katsukuni	Kaga	c. 1624	Green	K
404677	Suemitsu	Bingo	c. 1350	Green - Juyo	T
T-367	Korekazu	Musashi	1864	Green	K
414208	Kanesada	Mino	1504 - 1521	Green	K
277569	Sue-Enju	Higo	15th c.	Green	W
275654	Terushige	Musashi	late 16th c.	Green	K

Mr Phebus says that a complete listing of the entire collection is probable in the future and that we can look forward to some good oshigata of some selected blades.

CHIKEI - INAZUMA - KINSUJI - SUNAGASHI -

A two-part question was sent in to the Newsletter by Andres Rodriquez last month. The question was, what causes chikei - inazuma - kinsuji - sunagashi to happen on a sword blade and also if there is an order of importance if one was to judge a blade by the appearance of only one characteristic. Our corresponding sensei, Albert Yamanaka was consulted on this question and supplied the following explanation.

You may recall that I wrote about this at length in the Newsletter (Nihonto Newsletter) some time back, however, no matter how much of this you put into writing you still can't cover even 1/10th of what it actually is as it is next to impossible to explain in "words" what these are. In this regard, SUNAGASHI would be the most simple to explain, as this is quite often found in blades which are made in Yamato Tradition MASAME grain. Small pebbles will be seen in straight lines in 3-4-5 lines running parallel.

WORKINGS (cont'd.)

CHIKAI, INAZUMA and KINSUJI are all the same, and depending on what part of the blade it is seen, they are called by different names. In the case when it is seen within the HAMON, it is KINSUJI. When it is found in the JI area, it is called CHIKAI. When it runs back and forth between the JI and the HAMON, then it is called INAZUMA.

The occurrences of these are "ONLY" found on blades of the first class swordsmith and they are NEVER found on blades of lesser ranking. This means that the steel in it's workmanship had a great deal to do with the end results - such as these occurrences. Also too, the heating of the blade in it's various stages also had many reflections on them and it is not the end result of one or two certain things which the swordsmith did. It began from the very beginning in the forging and folding of the steel, the material used, etc. etc. I am of the opinion that everything all combined had to be exactly right from the very first step to the very end, and ONLY THEN did the final result appear as such.

They are small pebbles of NIE clustering together forming a line or strings, "BUT" these NIE lines are a little different from the ordinary ones you see on most blades. NIE is usually rounded so that it will seem as though you are looking at a 'dew drop' which is mounded. Of course, the blade must have been polished by a first class polisher in order to bring out these characteristics, which an ordinary polisher is unable to do correctly. So actually, it is next to impossible to someone in the West to comprehend what I am saying here, if he has never seen it or has had them pointed out to them actually by hand. (no offence ment)...so even if you did have a person who can show it to you, if there is no sample sword with which to point this out....

AY

Reflecting on the above comments - The process of learning to recognize what is GOOD in a sword is of course an arduous task, particularly in the West simply due to the lack of an available sensei plus the lack of good sample swords. Trying to understand nie and nioi workings simply from books is an impossible expectation. The Japanese texts illustrate these 'workings' with good oshigata - something which we plan to do in future Newsletters, at least as a start.

The following comments are personal deductions derived from much reading and impressions gained in conversations, letters, etc., thus my 'excuse' in case these are WRONG in concept!

Chikie - Kinsuji - Inazuma....are all nie - but contrary to what one expects to see, these 'appear' more as SOLID LINES, following the hada viens of the steel. This is why it is more evident or found in steel worked in masame.

WORKINGS (cont'd.)

SUNAGASHI on the other hand (Hakikaki too) are also lines of nie, but are distinctly individual, rounded (mounded) observable nie.

The true understanding of these workings will no doubt take the guiding finger of a competent sensei, saying "this is this because...." For us less fortunate collectors, perhaps a little discussion will at least enlighten up into a nominal grasp of the subject and at least make us 'look' for such workings.

STUDY SESSION - MISHINA SCHOOL -

Study sessions on specific schools, smiths, etc., have been talked about many times before with little action. Just such a session did actually take place this fall in the Chicago area. This meeting was attended by Messrs. Lewert, Nettles, Wysocki, Hanacek, Schultz, Brunsden, and Hashioka. Roy Hashioka was kind enough to send us a report on this session as follows:

Regarding our Mishina confab - it was an enjoyable afternoon and I think we all learned something. We had eight blades to study and compare. This pilot study was initiated and hosted by Professor Lewert. Because most of us know very little about our blades, we gained a 'toe-hold' by this study. Despite the fact that we sorely felt the lack of a sensei, the fact that the blades either had papers or were spoken for by the likes of Ogawa-san was reassuring and lent credibility. As a source of information and reference, we used the NIHONTO TAIKAN and the OSAKA TAIKAN.

We observed/learned the following: 1) Mishina boshi, 2) The sudare hamon, 3) The kyo-yakidashi, 4) The fine (Mishina) ji hada, 5) the general shape and weight, 6) The peculiarities of some of the inscriptions (both glyphs and kiku mons.).

I believe that to any serious sword collector this pilot study was most worthwhile, especially when I recall how just a few years ago we used to float aimlessly around.

RH

"A REPORT ON THE TIMES" - SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS -

(ref: NL Vol. 5 No. 6)

Coming as they did from a collector, broker, and very well informed person, RB's remarks in the last Newsletter were of considerable interest to me, as they doubtless were to others. Even when read several times with considerable care and allowance for their transcription from a tape, I do find them somewhat inconsistent in places and perhaps lacking a specific rationale for the behavior advised. I am however in full agreement with the overall tenor of RB's remarks.

COMMENTARY (cont'd.) -

As some of you know I have commented at length on Japanese swords as investment assets ("On Investing in Japanese Swords", in R. B. Caldwell, ed., Book of the Sword, Dallas - 1972), and the span of the last year has through the lessons of its events convinced me of the general correctness of the line of reasoning laid out there. The general argument was that under "normal" market conditions and on average the actual dollar rate of return can be predicted to be lower on art objects than other forms of investment assets with the same risk properties attached to them. Now of course when the market is strongly influenced by the hectic buying of many new and frequently well-heeled collectors, then as RB says, one's mistakes get hidden in rising markets. In addition if allowances are made for the fact that some collectors are very much better informed than others, and this information comes only at a substantial cost in dollars or time, then of course some collectors are going to do very significantly better than our average investor.

Things have changed! The first evidence that I had of it was the striking absence of the number and eagerness of buyers at the recent November Pikesville show in comparison with the similar event in May. Secondly, while I have not as of the time of this writing yet received my price list, I understand that the sums realized at the large November Parke-Bernet sale were strikingly below expectations. What can be made of this? I think that we should distinguish between the long run tendencies at work in the market on the one hand and the more cyclical behavior on the other. I think we can be fairly sure that the bottom will not fall out of the sword market for high quality items, or even lesser items once they have found their proper relative position, from a long run point of view. I for one would certainly not be nearly as optimistic as RB though that good authenticated swords "will continue a rise of 15% - 20% a year for many years to come." That would mean that on average that they would double in value every 4.1 years, and do you realize how short a time it would take for a Masamune to be worth the Empire State Building? I doubt that such a rate of growth has ever been observed for any period even as long as 15 years.

The interesting question seems to be how to explain the recent cyclical downturn or at least pause. Two factors seem of dominant importance. First some of the eternal truths of art collection, usually centering around the dictum of caveat emptor, are beginning to work their effects. In recent years this market has simply been flooded with new and almost always uninformed collectors, and as RB said "A lot of people are getting burned already." During any speculative bubble, worthless or near-worthless material can appreciate like mad until the rate of new inflow slows or until people begin to ask questions about the intrinsic worth of the investment. When the investment is an art object, the answer can often be a very rude awakening. Secondly and more consistent with the notion of a cyclical explanation has been the very sharp downward adjustments we have all had to make about the economic future because of unanticipated events now referred to as "the energy crisis." Economists as some wag once

COMMENTARY (cont'd.)

said, always divide on both sides of any issue, but I for one have never observed such extreme divergence of estimates as to the intermediate picture of the impact on economic growth and the structure of the economy because of fuel constraints. In short there is a great deal of uncertainty as to future rates of GNP growth and the unemployment rate. I for one think that the next two or three years are going to be quite rough, but whether that comes to be or not, what is certain is that our economic system has little toleration of uncertainty, and that we have in abundance. As a general rule art objects are better "investments" than stocks during a period of severe recession or significant pause in the rate of real growth. I think we are seeing this phenomenon now. Putting the question of first class material aside, it ought to be harder to sell material at a predicted price, and the rate of appreciation of those collections put together by even the more shrewd collectors will tend to slow. An obvious prediction is that the rate at which we have added new collectors will slow, collections will be more static, and we will lose some collectors.

RB does mention that "it is easier to buy good tsuba today rather than good swords", and I heartily agree. That certainly was true of the last Pikesville show. California dealers had absolutely first class tsuba in much larger relative amounts than there were first class blades at that show. I saw a number of tsuba there that were well worthy of inclusion as illustrations in serious Japanese tsuba studies, and with one or two exceptions that certainly couldn't be said of the blades present. While fairly moderately priced, these tsuba tended to be passed over. I think the explanation lies in a sea of ignorance that Western collectors tend to possess about tsuba. It is easy to turn to a Hawley type reference and find out if your prospective blade is "worth it" - there is no such ready help for the tsuba collector. I also suspect that even though the obvious visual aspects of tsuba are so strong, it is harder for a beginner to tell a good tsuba from a poor one than to do the same for a blade.

Finally the issue of a deteriorating relationship between the Japanese and the West is mentioned along with some possible future consequences for sword collectors. We can only hope that such prognostications are premature at this time. We do know that after much oblique internal discussion the Japanese have a well known capacity for abrupt changes of course. To cover our bets so to speak it might be high time for the JSS/US to explore the prospects of working out some regular relationship with Mr. Nakajima again, or alternatively of at least seriously examining the costs and benefits of bringing another polisher of good quality to the U.S. What an impact on our membership list that would have!

Arnold Frenzel

SHIGETSUGU OSHIGATA

BY Roy Hashioka

- SHAPE/STYLE - Shinogi zukuri, Ichori mune, sakizori, chu-kissaki, normal thickness.
- KITAE - Mokume mixed with ko-itame, masame in shinogi-ji.
- HAMON - Gunome midare, ashi, medium depth nioi deki, some kinsuji.
- BOSHI - Midare komi, komaru, medium kaeri.
- NAKAGO - Ubu, one mekugi-ana, kaku yasurime, kurijiri.
- HORIMONO - Omote: Ken, Ura: renga and bonji.
- LENGTH - 60.8 cm.
- SORI - 1.2 cm.
- MEI - Oite Toyama, Mitsuru ō Teninai Kasama Ikkansai Shigetsugu Saku (made by Shigetsugu at the estate of venerable Toyama, Mitsuru.).
- DATED - Showa Ju-ni Nen Hachi-gatsu Hi (August 1938).

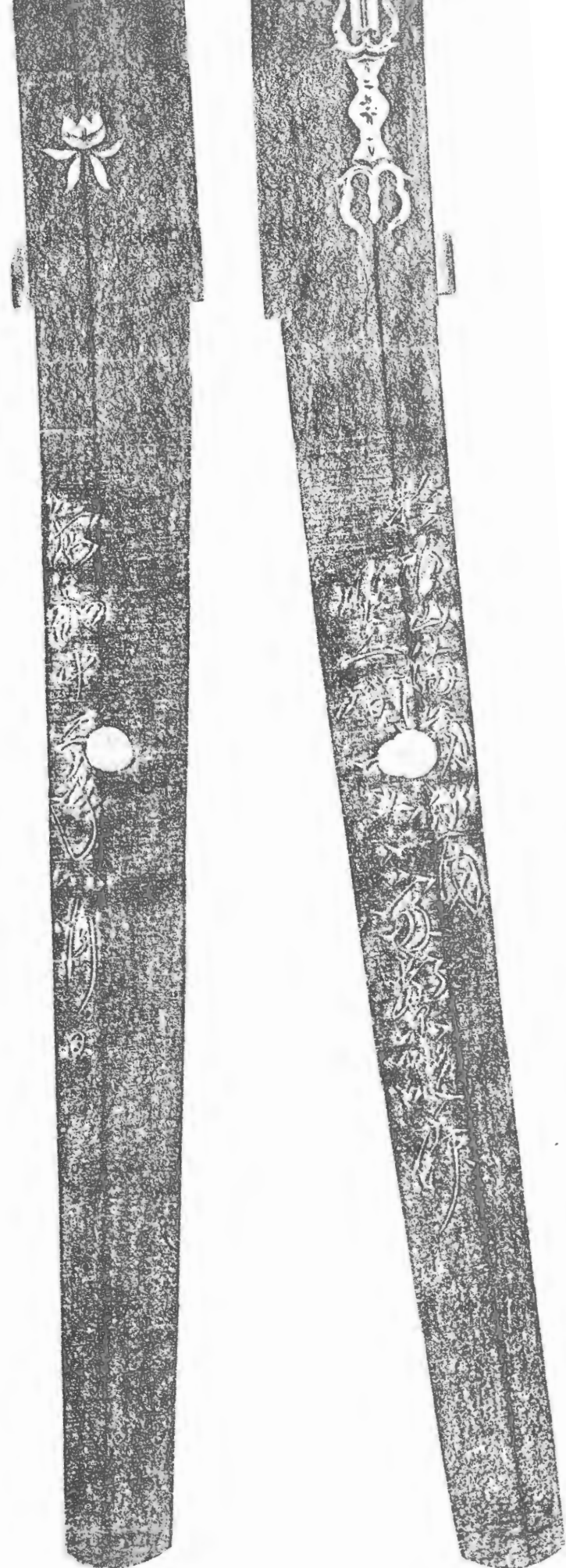
EXPLANATION:

Kasama Ikkansai Shigetsugu (1886 - 1966) was one of the leading gendai swordsmith and a master carver. He is among those responsible for keeping the art alive. He had many students, many of whom are today making a name for themselves.

Toyama, Mitsuru (1855 - 1944) probably best known as the moving spirit behind the KOKU RYU KAI (Black Dragon Society). An ultra-nationalist, a man of unrestrained energy and a great organizer. He assumed an important role in the annexation of Korea and the invasion of China.

On July 7, 1936, the Sino-Japanese War started with the Marco Polo Bridge incident and by August 1938, when this sword was forged, the Japanese army already occupied much of China, including most of the important cities. Military fever was high. There were many blades forged at the Toyama estate and many were evidently given to the cadre of dedicated young junior officers whom Toyama so effectively inspired.

RH



KASAMA IKKANSAI SHIGETSUGU
(1886 - 1966)

SOCIETY ELECTION -

Legally, the society was required to hold our election of Directors in December of 1973. Due to the development of the society into primarily a corresponding type society vs. one of regular meetings, shows, etc., no formal election was held. This problem was discussed among the officers and the following course of action was decided upon.

Since no new names have come up during the past two years expressing a specific desire to serve as a Director, it was suggested that we run the old slate of Directors for another two year term. The men involved were contacted and agreed to serve another term in office. To implement this action, we propose that unless there is some voice of objection heard to this action, mailed to the society Secretary, no later than the 1st of March, 1974, this election will be declared accepted by the membership by acclamation.

In the event that vacancies do develop in due course of time, there are several members available who have shown considerable interest and concern towards our success as an organization who would probably serve willingly in this office of Director. It is important that all of our officers and directors are willing to work towards a common end - a better and larger society of art lovers! It is obvious that the old slate contains men of this stature.

RCH

LIBRARY ADDITIONS -

During the previously discussed program, "The Making of a Samurai", members Rick Mantegani and Henrick Olsgaard taped the various lectures. It is their intent to put these lectures on casset tapes and place them in our society library for all of us to enjoy and learn from. The labor of this task is still being performed, but this offering will be made within a month or so. A debt of thanks is owed to Rick and Henrick for thinking of this effort.

NOTE: The 1973 Bulletin was mailed out 1/27/74 - if you did not receive your copy, contact the NL.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next scheduled NL is due out the end of March. Please have all articles, requests, information, etc., to the NL editor no later than the third week of March. Send all material, etc., to:

RON HARTMANN