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## *A Conversation with Sugano Sensei*

By Bill Birnbauer

It was wrong to describe Aikido simply as a martial art, Sugano Sensei said in a strong statement during the recent summer school in Melbourne.

Buying into local discussion about the nature and direction of Aikido, Mr Sugano spelt out his own deep understanding.

I put to him that some students believed that one's ability as a martial artist in Aikido needed to be tested in a real fight. Here is what he had to say.

"To start with, to classify Aikido as a martial art is to me wrong. Once you start saying martial art, obviously that's combat technique... Aikido is not in the same category.

"Aikido is very much more self-improvement or self-development ... that is the purpose. That's why I don't like to see training as just attack, defence. That application is there ... but the fighting concepts overshadow the real purpose of Aikido – to improve oneself.

"If you think attack defence, attack defence ... you are thinking at that level so you think how strong or how to beat someone, but never achieve the real idea of Aikido." Expanding on this, Mr Sugano, who brought Aikido to Australia 35 years ago, said students' understanding evolved through focussed training. (One minute of focussed training was worth more than 10 minutes of mechanical training.) Over years of training, an increased understanding of body movement, and even of oneself replaced the initial reliance on fast, physical movements. Experienced aikidoka developed an inner sense of Aikido.

Explaining, he said: "You do the same technique after three years, it looks the same, but inside it is different."

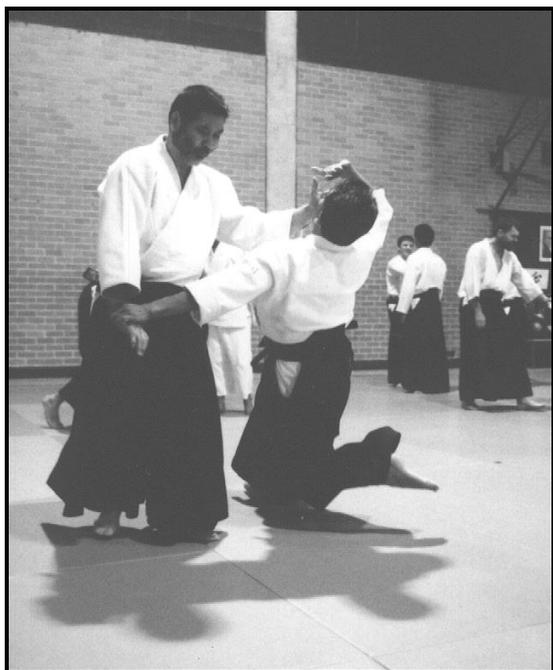
Because Aikido did not have competitions, unless students gained something in themselves, it amounted only to a series of physical exercises.

Mr Sugano's views are significant because they come at a time in which there has been debate in some areas about whether Aikido was a martial art or some other activity with martial aspects attached.

Mr Sugano also reflected on his arrival in Australia in 1965 as a 25 year old, fifth Dan with ambitions of introducing Aikido to the country. In the years before his journey, Mr Sugano had trained at the Tokyo Hombu Dojo run by the late Mr Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the third son of Aikido founder, Mr Morihei Ueshiba, or O-Sensei. During this time, as one of seven or so uchi-deshi at the dojo, he trained with O-Sensei and other senior students who were to spread Aikido around the world.

O-Sensei gave Mr Sugano permission to promote Aikido in Australia, where he wanted to move for personal reasons. When he got here, the only person teaching Aikido as far as he could judge, was a judo instructor teaching from a book. He rented space in a gym in Sydney's West Ryde and his first students were people who had heard about Aikido while visiting or living in Japan. Others had done judo or yoga. Numbers gradually increased as news spread by word of mouth.

I wondered, if as a 25 year old, Mr Sugano felt intimidated by the responsibility of establishing Aikido in a country as big as Australia. He laughed and intimated that he never quite saw it that way. "When you are young you can overcome so many difficulties ... I never had a feeling (it was) difficult," he said.



Sugano Sensei practicing Tenchi-nage during Tamura Sensei's class

Sensei was invited to establish Aikido in Tasmania and then Melbourne soon after. It was at this time he met a keen young student, Tony Smibert, the current head of Aiki-Kai Australia.

Before leaving to take up instructing in Belgium after 13 years here, Aiki-Kai Australia was established in each state to maintain standards and promote Aikido. Mr Sugano, who visits Australia for winter and summer schools each year, stayed in Belgium for eight years before moving to New York where he lives and teaches today.

And his wish for the new millennium?  
Mr Sugano's response was familiar to anyone who has trained with him in recent years. **More focus in training!**



Sugano Sensei, with Bob Botterill in an unenviable position

*Editor's note: This column is an opportunity for senior students to express some thoughts on how they see Aikido and what it means to them. Peter Morgenroth was promoted to Yondan at this Summer School.*

## “A Personal View”

### *Aikido and Martial Efficacy*

By Peter Morgenroth

Of late I have been hearing a renewed discussion of martial efficacy and Aikido. There seems to be two schools of thought. One views martial efficacy as a peripheral issue in following “the way,” and rejects the realities of conflict as irrelevant to, if not the antithesis of, Aikido. The other takes the view if Aikido will not answer to the reality of physical conflict there is something gravely amiss that is unlikely to be put right by the claim of irrelevance.

It seems to me that both schools of thinking run the risk of rejecting the essential core of Aikido; one dwelling excessively upon the aiki-budo or bujutsu which the founder transcended, the other in danger of denying the goal of harmonious resolution of conflict.

In my experience, the practice of Aikido defines the path that answers both concerns. The same means that allow the safe execution of tactics in training allow the safe execution of those tactics in response to an attack. The method of training generates its own falsifier (reality check) so that ‘testing’ need not take place on a battlefield. In any set piece training, if your training partner, knowing in advance what you are going to do, can be controlled and kept safe, and not bring you to harm, you have avoided physical consequences of conflict and proven the martial efficacy of your ‘technique’ (at least in that instance; which is all you can ever do).

I do not believe that Aikido dismisses the conflict as irrelevant. On the contrary, Aikido embraces conflict, seeking its resolution through the principle of Aiki. The philosophical argument about an ‘attacker’s’ intention, about whether conflict was intended, is obviated by removing the issue (*sensu strictu*) of intent to the realm of ki which is plainly manifest in the perceptual word. In summary, there is no conflict either physical or philosophical, and martial efficacy does not require external verification. Aikido is complete within itself.

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Report by John Litchen.  
Photos: Hugh Derham.

# Summer School 2000

Ask anyone who was there, and they will tell you that this was a magical Summer School.

Perhaps the large number of overseas visitors with their different views brought out the best in all of us. Possibly the magical number 2000 inspired a renewed enthusiasm, or maybe it was simply knowing that Tamura Sensei accompanied by his wife would soon be there made everyone do their utmost to practice as best they could.

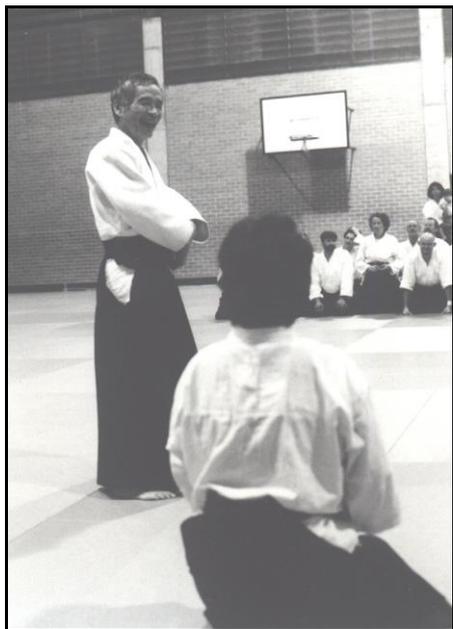
Whatever the reason, the feeling on the mats seemed transcendent. There was a wonderful feeling of joy to the training.

It was great to catch up with old friends after a year's lapse, and to meet new friends from overseas who brought with them a wealth of knowledge and new approaches to familiar techniques. But there was also a sense of maturity. Aiki-Kai Australia was coming of age. This year is the beginning of the 35<sup>th</sup> year since Sugano Sensei started his Aikido School in Australia, and I believe there was a feeling of transition and re-evaluation embedded in the thoughts of everyone training. People who had been training for a long time found a re-kindled enthusiasm no doubt inspired by the *almost magical* presence of Tamura Sensei.

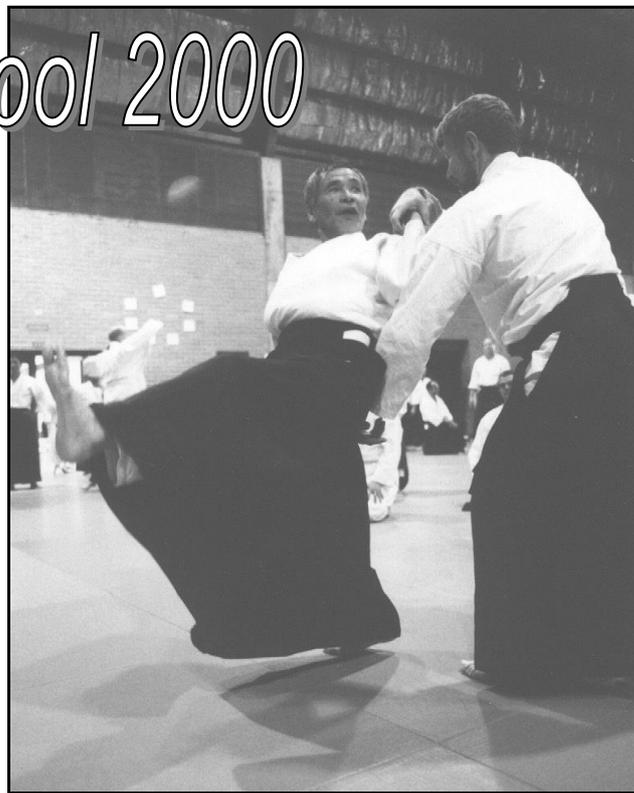
There was a feeling in the air, a vibration perhaps, to which Tamura Sensei referred while telling us a tale about potato washing monkeys on an island in Japan. He concluded this tale with his thoughts that if we practiced Aikido with joy, we would send vibrations into the air and other Aikidoka elsewhere in the world would feel this and they too would be inspired to practice with more harmony and joy.

It was an inspiration to all of us to see Tamura Sensei joining in to train during Sugano Sensei's classes, and to see Sugano Sensei practicing with the rest of us during Tamura Sensei's classes.

This was a Summer School those of us who were there will never forget.



As editor I spoke to a number of overseas visitors who were happy to answer some questions about why they came and how they felt about the training during this very hot week of intense practice.



## **Andrew Williamson from New Zealand.**

*Did you come to Australia just for this school or did you come specifically because you knew Tamura Sensei would be here?*

"I'd been talking about coming to that [Summer School] for the last couple of years, but Tamura Sensei was perhaps the reason why we turned up this year rather than some other. It was both, Tamura Sensei and Sugano Sensei."

*What about the training, what did you think of the standard, or the type of training we have been doing during the school?*

"I thought very similar to what we have in New Zealand. Lots of fun. Really enjoyed it. The hardest thing was coping with the heat." [Temperatures ranged from 35 to 38 degrees Celsius.] Our Summer would be 5, maybe 6 or 7 degrees cooler.

*It has been rather warm, but not as warm as some other years. Now, having experienced practicing with Australian Aikidoka, what do you think of the standard of their training. Their ability, experience? Do you think it is up to the level in New Zealand, or better...?*

"I think it's very comparable. For a start, New Zealand is more compact. We have fewer people, so there are fewer training. There is quite a range of styles too in New Zealand, because each year we have a different Shihan visiting from Hombu Dojo. So you tend to get a bit more variation in the people. But you've got it here too. Some people are very strong, some people small, it's very comparable."

*Would you come back to Australia to attend another Summer School like this?*

"Yes. Yes, I always enjoy seminars and this has been great. What I would like to see is this on a weekend. That would suit us. It's hard to get away during the week."

## **Kevin Allan, also from New Zealand.**

"I came mainly to see Tamura Sensei. I've seen most of the other people Sugano Sensei has brought out. Tamura Sensei was the incentive."

—Aikido Australia—

*What did you think of the training we received from both Shihan?*

“So far, fantastic. Really really good. A bit hard coping with the heat, as Andrew said.”

*It was 34 today.*

“Even you guys are suffering. We’re used to 15, not 35.”

*Obviously though, you enjoyed it.*

“Oh yes, very much. You guys have been great, and the ladies, great.”

*How does it compare with your training in New Zealand?*

“Very much the same, as Andrew said.”

*And would you come back again?*

“Oh yes. Definitely. Certainly would.”

**Gaby Saxer from Switzerland.**

“Actually it was a language study course that brought me to Australia, in Perth. Also an opportunity to catch up with some old friends and to balance it I trained in Aikido in the club in Perth. They informed me about Summer School and they did a good job of convincing me.”

“They told me Tamura Sensei was going to be here. They told me in Perth, then I was even more pleased.”

*Have you trained with him before?*

No. I never had the opportunity to train with him, so I was very curious about his style.”

*And what do you think of him?*

“He’s very interesting.”

*What about the training, so far?*

“I’ve got a very good impression, everything well organised, accommodation, everything. People so nice, so friendly. And it was really a nice atmosphere on the mats. Techniques shown were interesting. And what I enjoyed so much was so many black belts. You could really work on techniques. I really enjoyed it. I don’t regret at all to come over.”

*Now having practiced with Australian Aikidoka, how would you compare their standard with those who you practice with in Switzerland?*

“No better, no worse. Many techniques I discovered are the same, with the exception the entries. Yes I got the impression it’s a good standard.”

*Would you come back again?*

“Oh I’d love to. If only the distance was not that great. Whenever I get the chance to plan again a trip somewhere like Asia or Australia, and it happens to be the same time, Yes.”

**Roland Stettler, originally from Switzerland but now living in New Zealand.**

“In my case, Gaby was in Perth and she was doing some Aikido while at English school. The plan first was after her school finished she was coming to New Zealand for holidays, but they convinced her in Perth to come to Melbourne for this Summer School. Then she convinced me to come over, to do some travelling around and to come to the Summer School.”

*Did you know Tamura Sensei was going to be here?*

“Gaby told me.”

*That would have interested you.*

“Oh yes. Two Senseis I haven’t seen before. That would be interesting, yes.”

*So what do you think of the training so far?*

“I really liked it. I really liked doing the weapons which in my opinion we don’t do enough of in New Zealand. I have done quite a lot in Switzerland before I did my Shodan, so that was always the part I was missing. I’m quite glad we did a lot of weapons.”

*What do you think of the training? How is the quality in Australia compared to New Zealand or Switzerland?*

“I think it’s pretty good. Just sometimes different styles. Techniques are more or less the same everywhere. The quality is good, not worse or better than anywhere else. Sometimes just a little different.”

*Would you come back again?*

“Definitely, if I can arrange my time.”

**Raymond Kwok Sin Chuan from Malaysia.**

*Did you come to Australia specifically for this Summer School?*

“Well yes. I planned this about a year in advance. I’d always wanted to come for a summer camp, or any camp with Sugano Shihan teaching. When I discovered, I think about 6 months ago from the French FFRB website, that’s Tamura Shihan’s organisation, that he was going to Australia in the year 2000, I checked with Aiki-Kai Australia. They confirmed that Tamura Shihan was coming. That’s why I am here.”

*Was it up to your expectations?*

“Yes, very much.”

*Having now experienced training with a number of Australian Aikidoka, how do you feel their training, or their standard compares to the standards you have in Malaysia? I know techniques may be applied differently because we have a different teacher, but are there similarities, or is there a big difference?*

“No there is no big difference. The kind of Aikido that we do in Malaysia is basically quite flowing, but maybe not as flowing as some of the Australian Aikidoka are. I think that the standard here is higher than in Malaysia, but then again it is a difficult comparison. In Malaysia we do not have many senior people, whereas you have many senior people who have very beautiful movements, so in that sense I think the standard of Aikido is higher here than in Malaysia. And I trained with quite a few of your people here wearing white belts. Now that’s very deceptive, because in Malaysia when you wear a white belt you are 7<sup>th</sup> kyu. For all the other Kyu grades we have colours, so when you look at someone with a white belt you assume that person is 7<sup>th</sup> kyu, but many of them in fact turned out to be 1<sup>st</sup> kyu and they were very good. There were no slouches. I thought they were very good actually.”

*Obviously you enjoyed the training...*

“Oh yes very much.”

*...because every time I saw you, you were smiling. Would you come again to another Summer School?*

“Yes, depending on the time when I am free, resources and so on. I would come again, but maybe not next year, but I definitely will come again.”



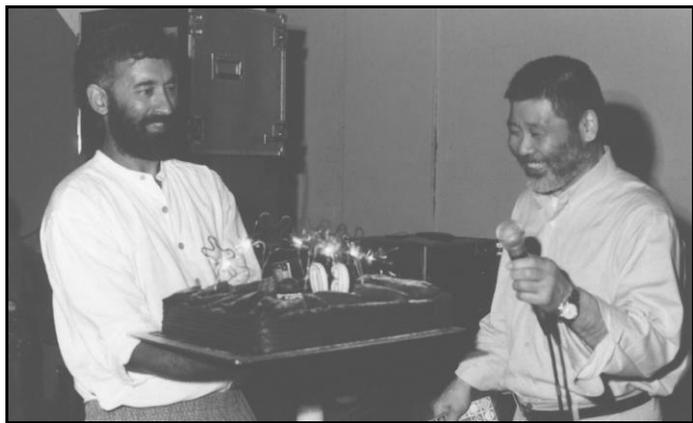
—Aikido Australia—

There were other visitors I didn't get the chance to interview. Jan from the Netherlands, who has also been to Australia before, Mr Watanabe from New Zealand, Doris from Germany, Laurence from France, plus several students who study with Tamura Shihan who followed him here especially for this seminar, and Mrs Tamura who also trained as hard as the rest of us. All of them helped make this a truly memorable week.

This time, the usual wind-up party was a little different. It was also a surprise party for Sugano Sensei who had turned 60 only a few weeks before. In Japan, turning 60 is an important event signifying the gaining of wisdom that comes with maturity, as well as a new beginning, a new life, with a mind (like a young child's) open to learning new things. Tamura Sensei referred to this in a speech he made before Mrs Tamura presented Sugano Sensei with a gift.



Other gifts were also presented. Leon Metzeling brought in an enormous chocolate cake with sparkling candles that Sensei couldn't blow out no matter how hard he tried. Sensei was also presented with a huge card that had been quietly circulating for the whole week so everyone training could write inside it a special note or birthday greeting to Sensei.



Sensei was very emotional and didn't quite know what to say.

Everyone was given a mask and a party hat to wear and all of us quickly got into the party spirit. The karaoke was a success, with two "characters" from Brisbane (who shall remain nameless) enticing Sensei to join them for a song. We were also splendidly entertained by a didgeridoo player, and a harmonica solo from another one of the Brisbane boys.

On a more serious note, a special award from Sensei was presented to John Van Reussel for his lifetime dedication to teaching Aikido in Australia.



Sensei also awarded a posthumous godan (5<sup>th</sup> Dan) to the late Peter Yost. An emotional Tony Smibert Sensei read a letter from Peter Yost's widow sincerely thanking everyone in Aiki-Kai Australia for the letters, cards, and words of sympathy she had received.

The party soon got into full swing with a jolly Tamura Sensei dancing on the crowded floor before disappearing to learn how to play the didgeridoo.



Later that evening Tony Smibert Sensei managed to get Tamura Sensei aside for a quiet conversation. Machiko kindly translated. The following is extracted from that conversation.

## Nobuyoshi Tamura Shihan

(With Tony Smibert Sensei.)

*Sensei, what year did you begin training in Aikido?*

It's a long time ago...when I was seventeen or eighteen years old.

*Did you become a student immediately of O-Sensei?*

No. I was introduced to Aikido by other Sensei. I joined Aiki Kai because I wanted to learn genuine Aikido.

*How did you meet the founder?*

The first person I met was Kisshomaru Sensei, not O-Sensei. I met O-Sensei some time after.

*These days, O-Sensei is an almost legendary figure, what was your first impression of him?*

My first impression was his face, different from other people. He looked really serious, sort of pure. He didn't look like a person who had done martial arts. I was sure I could learn something from someone like this.

*When did you become an apprentice, an uchi deshi?*

This is very difficult to answer. I was 16 or 17. It was too young. This was after I left home and I had met Yamaguchi Sensei. It was just before he was to get married. Yamaguchi Sensei was from Kyushu, and was going back to his family home for one month. He asked me to house-sit for him while he was away. I did this in return for meals. Food was very expensive then. When Yamaguchi Sensei came back from Kyushu with his new wife, it was too awkward for me to stay since there was only one bedroom in the house. So Yamaguchi Sensei suggested I go to the dojo to stay, to become an uchi deshi. I wasn't sure I could afford it but Yamaguchi Sensei said it was free. So I accepted.

*That's a very unusual beginning. What was O-Sensei like as a person? And in the dojo?*

He looked gentle, like a grandfather, very human. But he was really different when he started to practice. He often used me as Uke. For example, if I tried seriously to hit O-Sensei, his eyes changed instantly. It was impossible to hit him. He was an old guy, and I was young. There was 50 years difference between us. I often thought it would be easy to hit him, but immediately O-Sensei sensed this intention, and his eyes changed. It was really scary trying to hit him.

*In Jiyu Waza practice with O-Sensei, what was the feeling like?, Hard or soft? Or no feeling?*

You have to receive without thinking, so it's automatic. You just have to receive. The moment I attacked O-Sensei he would immediately disappear. When I observed someone else attacking it seemed O-Sensei moved slowly. But whenever I attacked him he disappeared immediately. Maybe it was his timing, or the space...it was different to watch him than it was to attack. At one time a young journalist took pictures of me attacking O-Sensei. I wondered what the journalist who knew

nothing about Aikido thought about it. He said it was really good and then he showed me the pictures. The picture showed me frozen, even the striking sword, but O-Sensei was just a blur of movement. That's why the journalist said O-Sensei was really good. That picture showed how great O-Sensei really was.

*What was your first impression of Sugano Sensei?*

You should ask Sugano Sensei.

*Actually I did ask Yamada Sensei what he remembered of Sugano Sensei, and he said he remembered a boy who loved to train.*

At the time all uchi deshi were not just eager to practice, it was their life to practice. They all tried to do their best. To be higher up, to grade, to be a great teacher — they didn't have any of those motivations. They just loved to practice.

*If you were describing Aikido for someone interested in another Budo like Karate or Judo, how would you describe Aikido to them? What is Aikido?*

I don't know. That's why I practice. I don't know what Aikido is. Maybe just before I die I'll find out.

I've heard the wine in Australia is very good, but I won't know this until I

taste it. It's the same with Aikido. Please try it. If you try and you like it, please continue. If you don't like it...

*Sensei, can you tell me about France? You've been there a long time. How many people have you taught in France?*

There are 30,000 people in my federation, but it's the number registered. It's not teaching directly.

*It's a lot of people.*

Compared to Judo and Karate this number is not so much.

*What is your impression of Aikido in Australia?*

This is a common question. More important is what do you think of Aikido in Australia? And what do you want to achieve? There is no meaning if I say good or bad. The main thing is that you enjoy your practice. That is really important.

*Sensei, what would your advice be for instructors in Aikido?*

The important thing is to love Aikido in order to develop yourself, your technique. Sugano Sensei loves Aikido. If you don't like Aikido and you think only about instructing, or you have to teach this technique, then this and that, maybe you start to get bored after a while. If you love Aikido and you continue to develop yourself, the student gets the same feeling and will also develop.

*Thank you Sensei.*

*Domo Arigato Gozaimashita.*





Moriteru Ueshiba — Doshu.

## Aiki-Kai Australia Japan Trip

Text and photos by Andrew Dziejczic

On the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1999 Shihan Sugano and Sensei Tony Smibert led a group of 20 Australians who attended the formal dinner to celebrate the inauguration of the Third Doshu of Aikido, Mr Moriteru Ueshiba. This took place in the Concordia Ballroom of the Keio Plaza hotel in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

The dinner was for me the real highlight of the eleven day Aiki-Kai Australia tour of Japan. Over 2500 people attended this formal dinner with individuals and groups including many notable Shihan from dozens of countries.

After speeches by several distinguished people including two former Japanese Prime Ministers, the Doshu was assailed at his table by a continuous stream of well-wishers who offered congratulations and gifts as tokens of the goodwill towards the new holder of the legacy of O-Sensei. (Ed. See previous issue of this newsletter, Spring/Summer 1999/2000 page 4 for story about Aiki-Kai Australia's very special gift.) So many people from so many countries were so obviously pleased and eager to renew their contact with the new Doshu. We also met many of those people on the mat at Hombu Dojo.

While the reception was the high point of the trip, training at Hombu was a real 'buzz' for us. Being able to train with Shihan (including our own Sugano Shihan) is not an opportunity that you often get anywhere else. This alone made the trip worthwhile for me. There was also the opportunity to train with people from all around the World. You generally have to stay with the one training partner for the whole of a class at Hombu, so it's a good idea to talk to people before class to find out who the best training partners are. There are some wonderfully experienced senior people who have trained at Hombu every day for 50 years. There are also uchi-deshi resident at Hombu who can offer you as good a workout as anyone.

Be warned it can be very steamy indeed in Tokyo. Even in late September at seven in the morning it felt like a sauna in the Hombu Dojo.

After training in Doshu's early morning class, the group went sightseeing around Tokyo. (Unfortunately Sugano Shihan was unable to accompany us on this occasion since he had to attend meetings on behalf of Aiki-Kai Australia). We got a distant view of Mt Fuji from the Tokyo tower, as well as a stunning view of Tokyo's amazing extent. We also visited a sword museum and saw the principal Shinto Shrine for Japan. Nearby, we stumbled on a Kyudo exhibition where the participants in full regalia demonstrated their art with due seriousness and ceremony.

Our visit to Tokyo would not have been complete if we had not descended en masse upon the Iwata Sisters where we bought new Gi, Hakama, and weapons.

Although we set off on a visit to Mt Fuji, we weren't lucky enough to be there on one of the 76 days of the year in which you can actually see the mountain. We did enjoy our cruise on Lake Ashi before taking the Bullet train to Kyoto.

Kyoto is the 'must see' destination for the tourist in Japan. I really should have had four weeks, not four days!



Former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu.

Sugano Shihan kindly acted as our guide around Kyoto. There are many national cultural treasures here and temples considered by UNESCO to be of World Heritage, all 'musts' for people interested in Japanese culture.

The group of 20 who went to Japan included some parents and spouses, and friends, and we all got on very well together. The visit was a wonderful introduction to the inspiration and positive energy the Doshu and the Hombu Dojo provides to the world, as well as a wonderful introduction to Japan.

***On a personal level, what are the things that have most struck me from the trip to Japan?***

For one, learning some of what it means to find yourself practicing with your own Shihan as a training partner. I think some experiences take time to percolate from the subconscious to the conscious. Perhaps this is the case with all techniques in Aikido. Perhaps this is why it can be so important to train with a Shihan. Our subconscious may recognise something a Shihan does and then we may spend a lot of time training in search of the same thing in ourselves.

On one occasion at Hombu Dojo, it happened that Sensei trained with me and one other person from Hombu Dojo. This was something new for me! I got to “throw” Sensei for the whole lesson (as you only choose the same training partner/s for a whole lesson).

I felt self-conscious, but there was no hint of self-consciousness or unwillingness in Sensei, no hint of anything changing the relationship of that moment of Uke and Nage.

Sensei was living and being his philosophy: he was in and of the moment, training — and neither in anything nor anywhere else. He remained my Sensei and I his pupil...yet for that moment we were *simply* training partners, moving in and with the techniques (however differently). However, Sensei moved as Uke better and quite differently to any Uke I had ever used. It was not just better, it was quite different from the experience of using any other Uke. Not only did Sensei move freely and smoothly with a feeling of no resistance, but also I felt as if I was trying (and somehow managed) to encompass a cloud in my arms, that flowed around me as I moved. I had the illusion it was never going to go anywhere else.

The function of the moment temporarily changed the dynamic of our interaction: when he was Uke, he was just my Uke for that moment. Sure he did occasionally stop other training partners when acting as Uke, but just for that class and for the purposes of that moment; he did not stop me.

The experience of Sensei as Uke has stayed with me and gnawed away at my subconscious, and I haven't been able to work out why. Now I start to see a few of the reasons why it stuck with me. My ties with Sensei — and so all our ties with Sensei — may be more complex than we give credit for. They may develop as we develop. I am now ready perhaps to see a little of what my subconscious flagged for later: the fact we are all pupils and partners. We can all be better Uke. We can make the technique live in a new way if we give our special energy to the technique in a way that gives Nage confidence that he can do something. Sensei was giving something new to those of us who had gone to Japan and who trained with him.

I also believe that Sensei was showing us that he, as much as anyone else, was following The Way set out by the Ueshiba family, in the Doshu's classes.

I am probably only seeing a few aspects. I don't pretend that what I have seen is the only way to see it, or that I have been singled out any more than a large number of us on the trip who trained with Sensei, but it was indeed a lucky thing to have Sensei there with us in Japan.

As organiser I would like to thank Aiki-Kai Australia for help with my fare, Sensei for acting as our guide, and the participants —for making my job as easy as possible by being such a wonderful group.

Andrew Dziedzic Sensei is the Area Representative for New South Wales.

**Editor's note:**

*At Summer school 2000 quite a few students of various levels had the opportunity to practice individually with Sugano Sensei and our special guest Tamura Sensei. I would like to encourage these students to write something about how they felt during this practice— and could they tell us if this experience has elevated their understanding of aikido to a new level?*

**AIKIDO 2000 POSTER**

To commemorate the new millennium and 35 years of Aiki-Kai Australia, a poster was produced for sale at the Melbourne Summer School. We were fortunate in having Tony Smibert agreed to the use of an image from one of his paintings as the basis of the poster. The graphic design and print production was arranged by John Rockstrom's company Medicus R&R.

The result is a very high quality poster which stands on its own right as a work of art as well as commemorating 35 years of the teaching of Shihan Sugano in Australia.

Some copies signed by Shihan Sugano are still available at \$150 as well as unsigned copies at \$40. These can be obtained from Leon Metzeling (phone 03 9873 1783). Please add on \$10 for packaging and postage.

Note: All proceeds from the sale of these posters go to Aiki-Kai Australia.

A letter from Tamura Sensei.

N TAMURA  
24 Chemin des 4 Platanes  
83470 SAINT MAXIMIN

Saint-Maximin, le 26 Janvier, 2000.

Mr Tony SMIBERT  
179 Mole Creek Rd.  
DELORAINNE —  
Tasmania  
7304, Australia.

Dear Friend,

The trip is over and we are back home.

You helped us so much that I don't know how to thank you.

It was a fascinating and enriching experience... New landscapes, new culture, new people... It's overwhelming.

I am most happy to have had the chance to meet such enthusiastic aikido practitioners, It was all possible thanks to SUGANO Sensei and all aikido people.

Please extend my thanks to everybody.

N. TAMURA.

田村信喜

## WINTER SCHOOL

The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Aiki-Kai Winter School

In May 2000, thirty-five years will have passed since Shihan Sugano arrived in Australia. His mission was to begin the teaching of Aikido in Australia on behalf of the founder of Aikido.

We shall be celebrating the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this occasion at the Winter School to be held at YMCA Camp Yarramundi, near Richmond, just outside Sydney. Registration will take place on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000, and the School will take place between Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July and Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July, inclusive. At the end of the School we will be having a big party to celebrate the occasion and to thank Sensei for his efforts.

Full information and enrolment forms will be issued by April. Please set the dates aside and book your leave! The dates of the Winter School coincide with the school holidays in NSW, Victoria, ACT and Queensland.

If the accident is serious, (one requiring immediate medical attention or where legal action might possibly be taken — such as - for example — any permanent disfigurement or effect on someone's earning ability) then notification must be provided **immediately** to the Insurer as to the details of the accident, and telephone contact should be made with Andrew Dziedzic, the National Insurance Co-ordinator, on (02)9285 2565 (w) or (02)9858 5241 or by Email on [dziedzic@chilli.net.au](mailto:dziedzic@chilli.net.au), or else the National Secretary by Email on [secretary@aikido.org.au](mailto:secretary@aikido.org.au) or by post to GPO Box 2783EE, Melbourne 3001, in default. This will allow us to claim under the Public Liability Policy.

Accident Reports should be forwarded to the secretary by mail or fax if the accident is not a serious one. For this purpose it is planned to make the Accident Reporting Package available for downloading from Aiki-Kai Australia Website at [www.aikido.org.au](http://www.aikido.org.au) so that Accident Reports can also be sent by Email.

If anyone wishes to make a claim under the Personal Accident Insurance for loss of income or for medical expenses, then notification of the accident **must** be given to the Insurer within 30 days. A fully completed claim form (completed by the treating doctor, the employer, and with a certificate by Aiki-Kai Australia that the person claiming is a member) **must** be with the Insurer within 90 days.

Please contact Andrew Dziedzic on the telephone numbers set out above or by Email at [dziedzic@chilli.net.au](mailto:dziedzic@chilli.net.au) if you have any queries.

For general information, please take note of the following.

### Accident reporting and personal Insurance Claims.

Aiki-Kai Australia will later this year re-issue an updated Accident Reporting Package and a reminder of the procedure for Personal Insurance Claims.

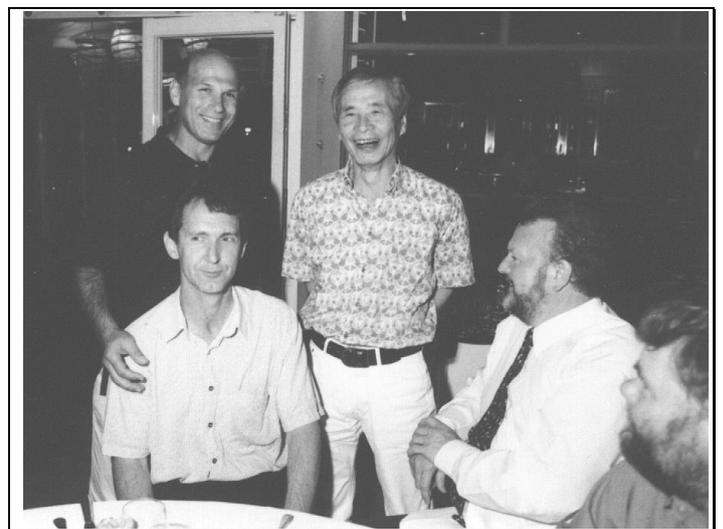
Aiki-Kai Australia has two types of insurance. Firstly it has public liability cover and instructors cover to protect members, instructors and the organisation from being sued for such things as negligence. This requires proof of liability; that is, proof of the fault on the part of the person sued.

Secondly, Aiki-Kai Australia has personal accident cover for its students. This does not require proof of fault and provides limited coverage for wages and some medical expenses.

For a claim under either type of policy, prompt notification must be given to the insurer, **Spotscover Australia**. *Delay in notification could result in the insurer refusing to cover the accident. This may result in catastrophic financial consequences to you personally and/or the instructor and/or the organisation.*

If there is any accident where a person suffers more than a minor injury, then an **Accident Report** must be filled in and urgently sent to Aiki-Kai Australia.

Most of the photographs in this issue were taken by Hugh Derham during Summer School. If anyone wants copies they should contact Hugh at the address listed on page 12.



Members of the Technical Teaching Committee enjoying a moment with Tamura Shihan.

## THE MASTER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP

By Tony Smibert

The most traditional way to learn a martial way is within a master-pupil relationship.

However, it may seem at first, that in a comparatively large organisation, like ours, it's not possible to be part of such a studentship with Sugano Shihan — particularly if you're a beginner.

I realise I was lucky to be one of Sugano Sensei's earliest students in Australia. I've enjoyed a close personal friendship with him, as well as the advantages of a close studentship. Still, I'm surprised that many current students don't realise how fortunate they are to have access to his instruction now, in the full maturity of his experience, and in a large organisation with so many high-ranking local instructors. The beginner today is uniquely placed to enjoy high quality instruction throughout Australia throughout the year! And at Summer and Winter Schools they can attend Sensei's own classes in the companionship of countless Yudansha, many with very high grades. We didn't have that opportunity.

When I began training O-Sensei was still alive. Of course, I dreamed of learning from him personally, but he died before I had that opportunity. Yet I was lucky to have access to his teachings through Sugano Sensei (his student) which is also the traditional way that budo teachings are passed on. So, when I bowed to O-Sensei on the mat, I certainly felt that I was his student; and I knew that I was Sugano Sensei's student! He was my direct link to Aikido.

You still have that same relationship to O-Sensei, even now. And we can all be "personal" students of Sugano Shihan. He has always said that it is the student who selects the teacher, not the other way around, and so it is up to the student to determine the quality of the connection.

Your own master-pupil relationship with Sugano Sensei commenced when you joined the Aikikai. One of the functions of your local instructor is to represent the Shihan and your connection commenced through this person.

Your gradings are issued on Sugano Shihan's personal authority. Progress through the "kyu" grades (which are national) occurs when the local instructor decides that you are ready to present for grading and you pass examinations, which occur regionally under the local authority of the Area Representative personally appointed by Sensei. These senior instructors appoint the kyu grading panels on Sugano Sensei's behalf. (Dan grades are international and tested by Sugano Sensei on behalf of Doshu).

Throughout the year there are various State and TTC courses under senior instructors then, at Summer and Winter Schools you receive direct instruction from Sugano Sensei. In these classes there is no one "between" you and the Shihan. You have exactly the same access as everyone else at every class. What you derive will depend on how well you have prepared yourself in your dojo training throughout the year. There, you'll also meet and train with lots of other students of wide ranging experience. The aikido community will get to know you until, by the time you meet the requirements for shodan, you'll find that many of the people watching your grading are fully aware of the personal efforts that carried you to that point.

The Dan tests are conducted by Sensei himself — who's personal recommendation then goes to Doshu. By that

time, Sensei will certainly know you. You will already have attended a number of courses taught by him, and he will have also have the recommendation from your instructor, Area Representative and the TTC before him throughout the grading. If you pass and he recommends you to Doshu, then he will present you with Doshu's own certificate.

In the years between first and second dan Sugano Sensei will continue to follow your progress. At this level you'll benefit more and more from intensive training with other Yudansha at local, TTC and National courses and should grab every opportunity to make the most of Sensei's own instruction. By the time you test for Nidan, everyone will be aware of your level of effort and commitment. And Sensei will be look for this in the classes and at the test, where he will be observing your own achievement — not comparing you with everyone else.

By Sandan you'll be well known to him and to most Yudansha. This is a great time when, depending upon the depth of your study, you may also find that training is more exciting than ever. Summer and Winter Schools become a time when you recharge batteries and, if you are like me, you will need the instruction of Sensei more than ever. You will also have plenty of opportunity to contribute in your own way to the organisation Sensei founded. In this way you can give back; because Aikido is, in essence a family, it requires a family effort. We help one another (look at the effort a small number put into organising a Summer school for everyone to benefit). And we entrust life and limb to others in the dojo while respecting the hard work and commitment of our fellow-trainees. Commitment and obligation are constant companions.

In western culture, the word "master" tends to imply power or control — as in the phrase: master/servant. A master-potter might therefore be someone who can work clay with a high level of expertise. But in Japan, "master" implies a state of harmony or oneness with the medium; an absence of duality or conflict between potter and pot for example; so that the clay seems to be an extension of the potter and the potter an extension of the clay. Consequently, there is an important distinction between the English word and what "master" traditionally means in Aikido. Application of "master" as a synonym for "Shihan" has lead on to confusion about the "master-pupil" relationship in Aikido. Certainly, Shihan and, consequently, "master-pupil" are complex ideas, open to differences of interpretation and application.

A student — especially one of many — must first understand that they will have to appreciate the master's own, often traditional expectations. The student has to meet and understand these in different ways and at different levels. Our studentship depends on what we seek, as well as our understanding and commitment. To learn Aikido the traditional way requires a mind that is open to change, as well as sincere and lasting commitment. There is also an exchange of loyalty and appreciation of the obligations that come, hand-in-hand, with studentship.

Summing up: you entered a master-pupil relationship on your first day; it will grow and you can "grow" it. Like most things in Aikido, it won't reveal its deeper meaning at once. But it's there. As we move towards our own oneness with Aikido we come to our own understanding.

**To learn Aikido the traditional way  
requires a mind that is open to  
change, as well as sincere and lasting  
commitment.**

## AIKIDO MORAL CODE

**THERE IS COMMITMENT AND THERE IS OBLIGATION**

**DO NOT ABUSE OR MISUSE THE ART OF AIKIDO**

**STUDY CAREFULLY, HONESTLY AND HUMBLLY**

**RESPECT YOUR SENIORS**

**TAKE CARE OF YOUR JUNIORS**

**Seichi Sugano 8<sup>th</sup> Dan**

### ***PETER YOST SENSEI 5<sup>th</sup> dan IN MEMORIUM***

I first met Peter Yost about 1964. Peter was around 40 years old. I was about 15. In the years that followed we became close friends – almost like family – in the way that can happen at Aikido. Consequently his recent death was more like the loss of a family member than a friend.

I'm not alone in this: Sugano Sensei, Dave Brown, and others from that era will all remember Peter as a close friend who truly loved Aikido. And he trained vigorously! It was a characteristic of Peter (both as a student and instructor) that techniques were applied with full extension, yet no one ever suggested that Peter expected more from others than he did of himself. Peter was also fascinated by Aikido, studying and applying its principles until the day he died.

He felt he was very fortunate to be a student of Mr. Sugano and was honoured that Sensei counted him a trusted personal friend. He played a vital role in the early development of Aikido in Australia and was the first person entrusted by Sensei to organise a course for him outside NSW. I attended my first classes with Sensei in Launceston, staying with Peter and Lorna, which was great because Sugano Sensei also stayed there and so we were able to get to know him personally. From about that time I particularly remember Peter peeling and eating a large block of chocolate as if it were a banana! I was a teenager; I was impressed!

Peter built his Tasmanian organisation with the doggedness that is necessary in a small population centre. He led by example! No one trained harder, or more often. Consequently, though the numbers were never large, training in Tasmania has always been energetic and sincere. Peter was, of course one of the oldest of our bunch, and it's only now – when I've reached "middle" age myself – that I can appreciate how substantial his commitment was when the rest of us (including Sensei) were so much younger. (I seem to remember hearing that, when he was in his late 30's, Peter's doctor had told him to slow down, "No stairs for you!" Peter's response was to take up Judo! And this led him to Aikido and his meeting with Sensei.) In recent years, Peter's physical training was interrupted by various health problems. But he always bounced back and into training as soon as he was able and taught regular classes whenever he could, as a consequence inspiring a new generation of trainees with his youthful enthusiasm.

After Peter died I was asked to make an address at his funeral (he always KNEW I'd get the last word in!) The funeral parlour had standing room only – an impressive indication of how many lives he'd had touched. He'd been an active family man, Rotarian, Probus member, Mason, and involved in skeet shooting and yachting as well as the senior Aikido instructor in Tasmania! He had also built up and

run a large family floor-covering business. No doubt, most of those present knew him for his involvement in one or more of those activities, but it probably came as a surprise to most Aikido people because we thought that Aikido took up all his time!

Peter was always impressed by other people's efforts and never made much of his own. I was very lucky to enjoy his friendship until the very day he died. He suffered many strokes, each one more debilitating until his movement was very limited and he found a lot of things confusing. But even in hospital we kept training together. We practised one-armed kokyu-ho and I was struck by the fact that he was working as hard (and as keen to pursue his study) as he had ever been. There were many instances when I felt honoured to be in the company of and have the chance of such unique training with one so pure of heart. On one occasion I got into trouble with Lorna when she caught me smuggling in short bokkens for a little "one handed sword-training"....

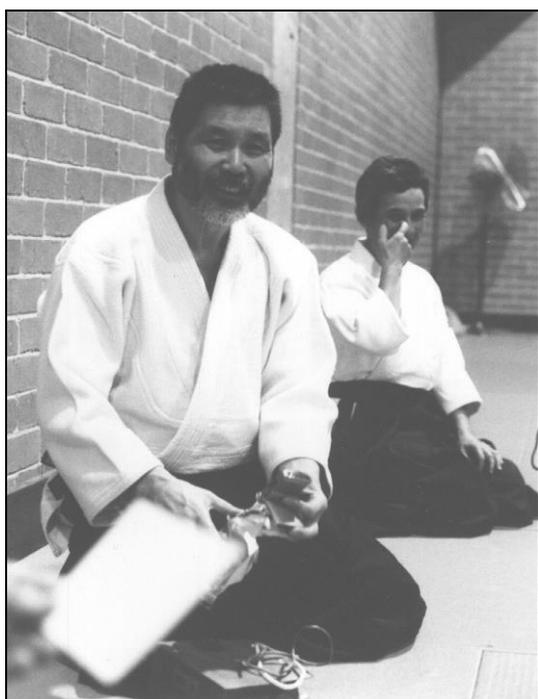
Finally, on the last day, when Peter could no longer speak, we held hands and I looked into his eyes for the last time. Even then his ki was intense. I said good-bye and thanked him from all of his Aikido friends.

Peter and Lorna had been greatly moved by the greetings that flowed in from aikidoka all over Australia. Peter was surprised to find that he had so many friends! Lorna spent most of each day, every day sitting by his hospital bed throughout his illness. A devoted couple, they were supported by their twin sons Rod and Greg and wonderful grandchildren.

Can Aikido create wonderful people? Or are we fortunate that it sometimes attracts and holds them? Peter's dignity at his passing, his stoicism and courage were, to me, impressive Aikido. I hope that we will always remember the person and his contribution.

Peter's recent elevation to 5<sup>th</sup> dan by posthumous award came about while we were celebrating our first 35 years and entering the new millenium.. Like climbing a hill and then coming down on the other side we might easily forget the efforts of those many people who made it possible for us to reach this point. They might seem to be in the past – on the previous ascent, and out of sight. Let's not do that. Peter's example reminds us to meet our obligation to protect and develop Aikido as he did. He believed in the ideal of personal growth through Aikido training and was committed to both his own development and his obligation to assist others on the same path.

Tony Smibert Sensei.



Shihan Sugano and Mrs Tamura express their thanks.

**Founder, President  
& Technical Director  
S. Sugano 8<sup>th</sup> Dan Shihan**

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