

A Bridge between Australia and New Zealand

合気道

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This Summer school held at the Australian National University in the heart of Canberra will be remembered not only for the high energy level and enthusiasm of the students who participated, but for the fact that after so many years we were able to invite our neighbour Nobuo Takase Shihan (See next page) to be a special guest.

The dojo was a fair walk from the dormitories, but it was not unpleasant being along pathways shaded by beautiful leafy trees. The air was fresh in the mornings and a leisurely stroll to the dojo relaxed everyone, putting them in the right frame of mind for the training. The fact that the dojo was air-conditioned was a bonus, especially in the afternoons when it got quite hot.

It seemed everyone was anxious to get started and right after the briefest of introductions by Tony Smibert Sensei, Shihan Sugano commenced, as he nearly always does, with *gyaku hanmi katate tori tai no henka*, and stretching in various ways which quickly escalated to a series of *kokyunages*. He would often demonstrate a technique with several variations. This was far more interesting than practicing one technique at a time. Uke had to be relaxed trying not to anticipate which variation Nage would do. To go with the flow and accept the technique was the only way. If Nage didn't repeat the variations in the same sequence each time Uke could not anticipate, and as a result concentration and awareness remained high with both Uke and Nage alert and sensitive to each other. This was high quality training.



The second part of each morning session was training with bokken, a series of patterns that Shihan Sugano has had us practicing for some time



now, and which it seems may shortly be introduced as a part of Dan tests.

The training on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons was taken by our special guest from New Zealand, Nobuo Takase Shihan.

With technical precision he demonstrated fine points within such familiar techniques as Shihonage and Iriminage with so much verve and enthusiasm that everyone taking his class was captivated. His approach was very different from Shihan Sugano and so was a delightful contrast that gave everyone a lot to think about. An important point that he emphasised was that everyone is different and that what he was demonstrating was the way a technique worked for him. He did not expect that it would work that way for everyone but he wanted us to try his way so we could find out for ourselves whether it worked for us or not. He also made it clear that whatever the approach to a technique the underlying principles should be the same. Blending, moving from your centre, redirecting to unbalance, throw or to pin Uke with minimum effort, to control Uke without hurting or damaging him.

Tony Smibert Sensei took a class on Thursday afternoon that by all accounts was well attended and very enjoyable.

Dan testing on Friday afternoon was the usual mixed lot with 17 students testing. Some were very good and others could have been better, however, everybody passed with several being commended by Sugano Shihan as being outstanding.

Friday night's party was a lot of fun with disco and karaoke, and some live entertainment from Mathew Moline of Brisbane who is a virtuoso on the mouth organ. There was a lot of dancing, a lot of drinking, (too much for some who seemed extremely happy), and plenty of food to nibble between drinks. Very few people went to bed before 2 am in the morning and surprisingly enough almost everyone turned up on time for Saturday morning's training. This session turned out to be intense, full on, and exhausting. No questions and answers this time, just hard training. Anyone with any sort of hangover would have sweated it out in the first fifteen minutes.



Shihan Sugano thanked everyone and commended them for their concentration and high energy. He said it was a very good school, a very happy school. It seemed everyone felt the same. Pictures were taken. The mats were stacked up to be returned to the various dojos around the country. The final lunch was served in the canteen, and many left on long journeys home. All of them would take home much to think about and lots of things to practice.

Late Wednesday afternoon, when Takase Shihan had finished his final class, a small group of us got together with him for a few beers and an informal conversation before dinner.

Because he was leaving the next morning I took this opportunity to ask him a few questions that I thought may be of interest to readers of this newsletter.

JL. *When did you start training AIKIDO and where?*



Takase Shihan: I started practicing Aikido in 1965. At Ise city in Japan where Ise Shrine is situated. My first professional teacher was Chiba Sensei. He went to England the following year, I think 1966. During that time at university many teachers came. I think it was the 2nd Doshu's intention to create a strong federation within the universities. So various universities got together and Hombu dojo allocated some instructors to be in charge of a number of universities. At my university, which was at Ise city, the instructor allocated was Chiba Sensei. After he went to England, the next instructor Hombu sent to us was Kanai Sensei. I think he went off to America or somewhere and the following year they sent us Ichihashi Shihan who was in charge of Nagoya area. The year after that came Watanabe Sensei. So I was tossed around one side to the next.

Did you ever meet O-Sensei?

Naturally during that period we were honoured to receive the founder O-Sensei accompanied by Okamura Sensei to open our sports hall at our university. We had a fantastic time.

Did you ever take Ukemi for O-Sensei?

Oh no, no. I had one experience at Hombu dojo on one particular occasion. Other than that I had no way of coming close to him. Because at that time we had gasshuku – living one week at Hombu dojo – each university had various times to do that – I was lucky and fortunate to meet O-Sensei in the morning – holding his arm and lifting him up the stairs. At the Hombu dojo there are living quarters on one side and office on the other. During practicing time whenever O-Sensei appeared in dojo, just happening to go to office, we had to stop and sit until he goes out again. He did this a lot and we have to sit often. It was a good experience.

You mentioned earlier that you have been 31 years in New Zealand. Why did you choose New Zealand?

I actually met another martial artist in Tokyo. He had a dojo in Auckland and he asked whether I was interested to come to New Zealand to teach. So I said fine. That's what happened. I went for short time, and stayed 31 years.

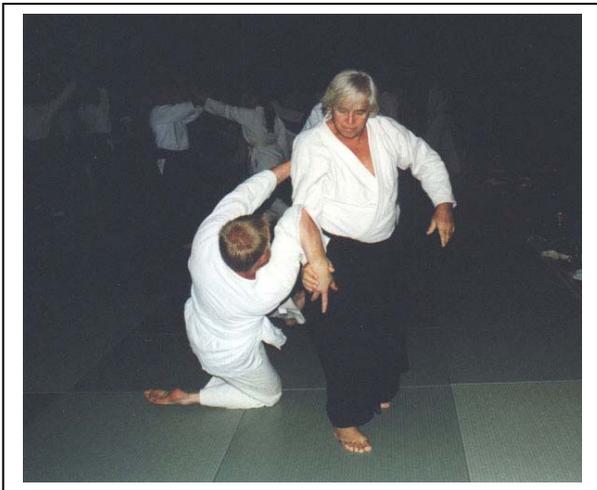


Editor: I hope the photos on this page and the ones before show how much everyone enjoyed this Summer school in Canberra

Report and photos by John Litchen

“A Personal View”

by Mark Matcott



The next Winter school will once again be held at Richmond in NSW during the second week of July. Everyone will be notified when dates are confirmed.

Doing your Dō. (Pronounced dough)

What does doing Aikido mean? Every day we get new answers and we learn new things about ourselves.

I have learned that when I leave my family for a week to go to summer schools, it's my wife Rowena who ends up becoming the expert on Aikido!

I teach high school. Once I was at home correcting a pile of Year 11 essays. One student had begun his essay with a spray for me, for the subject, for all his other teachers and for the education system in general. Indeed, he managed to pack not one but five expletives into the first paragraph of his essay.

Not surprisingly, I went into a fit of expletives of my own: “Who does this kid think he is handing in this sort of ----!! Just wait ‘til I get my hands on that little twerp...”

“Now, now. That's not Aikido darling”, my wife chimed in.

Fantastic! She's never so much as tied on a gi and here she was reminding me that Aikido requires me to come up with a better response than just *studenticide*. I began the next day making seven photocopies of the offending essay. When I handed back the whole class' essays, I nonchalantly handed this boy a photocopy of his piece, with a red biro note saying that if I didn't receive a proper essay first thing next morning, I would pass those photocopies on to the 'appropriate' people. (Actually I had no idea to whom I might show them, but bluffing is fun).

Classic tenkan! I just stepped out of his way and guided him toward the emptiness he was already heading for.

It worked. He handed in a mighty fine essay the next day, and I had had the most successful Aikido experience of my life. No one had been hurt, none of the other students were even aware that a confrontation was taking place and no one had lost his dignity. Except for me perhaps, realising that Rowena was better at Aikido than me!

Learning Aikido from Books?

You can't, but you can have fun exploring ideas, looking for significant differences in the ways techniques are performed, and being ready to see an idea that you sooner or later discard as being simply balderdash.

In a book on Aikido that I read recently, the author refuted the old saying, “Practice makes Perfect”. She argued that **“Practice makes Permanent”**.

I think she's got a good point. For example, if you have constantly trained in a backward roll for *Kotegaeshi* or *Shibonage*, and you are called upon to take fast *Ukemi*, your reactions will be fast but they may be inappropriate and unsafe. You also need the drilling in **forward rolls** from those throws, so that your reflexes are there when needed.

I believe lots of the drills that you would think suitable for 'street self defence' might just get you crunched. You need to be clear about what the drills are really for and so you need the best supervision, advice and teaching. This is why training with Sugano Shihan at national schools is not just an option. If you are going to make some reflexes permanent, it's best to build the good ones in. Training attentively with a master is your best chance to get “the right stuff”.

I also think there is a popular myth in Aikido that needs to be debunked. Continued on page 8.

In 1965 when Sugano Shihan moved from Japan to Sydney there were no existing Aikido dojos or organisation. Many of the early students who came to study under him at that time had already studied other martial arts. Some even had a previous involvement with Aikido.

In Melbourne there were a number of students who had been studying Aikido under Judo Sensei Arthur Moorshead at the Caulfield Judo Club. Among these Bob Hill was one such student.

It was through Arthur Moorshead's connection with Judo in Tasmania and in particular with Peter Yost Sensei that these students were first introduced to Shihan Sugano. This occurred when Peter first invited Shihan Sugano to run a training weekend in Launceston in June 1967. This training weekend made a huge impression on all those who attended and for some of them it began a long-term involvement with Aikido. This is certainly true of Bob Hill Sensei who is still training and teaches Aikido near his home in the County of Wiltshire 150 km west of London.

In 1974 Bob's keen interest in Aikido led him to move to Sydney so that he could train directly under Shihan Sugano. Three years later (in 1977) he travelled to England for the first time and he continued his training at various dojos there. He returned to Melbourne in 1982 and taught classes at several locations including Latrobe University and the Caulfield Dojo, which to this day shares the facilities of the Caulfield Judo Club. He moved again to England in 1991

I knew that Bob had a broad exposure to training in different places and under different Shihan so I asked him how much the individual experience or personality of a Shihan came into what they taught. His response was that there were a number of people who had the same training experience (direct students of O Sensei training at the same time) whose teaching is not identical, and so their teaching does reflect something about them in particular. He went on to say that this was true of anybody in Aikido and that in fact this was characteristic of Aikido training, that it wasn't military training and that 'personality' does come through

JW *What do you think Sugano Sensei meant when he said that Aikido isn't military training?*

BH That Aikido is a 'way'.... It's not a style, not a sport. It's not something that's fixed but it takes its shape by circumstances. I've actually been in classes where Sugano Sensei has stopped us. For example doing weapon training we were counting by numbers one, two, one, two, for some exercises and we were all conforming and doing the same foot pattern and hand movements at exactly the same time. He stopped us and said, "No it's not military training - train by yourself". He wanted to get us to break the mould where everyone was conforming to this technical model - he wasn't teaching this technical model.

Earlier you also said that you felt that Sugano Sensei was presenting Aikido as a 'way' as a whole thing not just as a technical exercise, can you remember what you were saying about that?

I can't quote him in that he hasn't said anything directly to me. He hasn't said this is exactly what I'm teaching, but that's what I've concluded from observing him over years and having had part of myself shaped by him. What you think you understand about Aikido is sometimes elusive I suppose. Just when you think you've understood something about it Sugano Sensei will do something else and move to another position either physically or sometimes mentally to upset what you thought you had and that's what he's teaching you - the totality of Aikido. He's watching what you're doing but he's also watching it from a perspective that I think is the Aikido perspective that he has. The times it's been brought home most closely to me is when I've been dealing with Sugano Sensei

first hand - either in conversation or one to one training with him when I was living in Sydney. A lot of times in Sydney when we were training he'd join in with us. I remember one time, training very hard with Hanan (Janiv Sensei) thinking we were throwing

each other very hard and thinking we've got it now - terrific! Then Sensei stepped in and allowed us to do the technique maybe once and then the next time he did something different in his receiving of it that stopped what we were doing. He quite often did this.

He'd let you do something once. You'd realise this because the next time you did it he would completely sweep you off your feet and negate what you were doing. Sometimes he'd literally pull you over with his receiving. He could do this because he was so far ahead of what you were doing, not anticipating because that's something you do when you're trying to stop someone's technique, but to teach you more, to teach something to really fill out your technique. At the same time he was saying things like 'extend more' or 'move your whole body' and you'd suddenly realise that technically you'd achieved something but you hadn't actually got the 'innards' of the technique or the feeling of it. He could pass that onto you. These were moments I remember about what he was offering - that's the totality I saw.

So do you think that because you had a unique opportunity to train with him personally in the 'early days' that perhaps students wouldn't have now, that you have had an advantage and that it's harder for students learning now?

I hope that's not true because I hope that people like myself who have had that experience would pass it on. That's the point for me anyway that you're not learning Aikido to conquer people below you, but it's to pass it on or that's part of what you're doing anyway. There are other reasons too. In training you're trying to pass it on either by telling people or trying to give them the feeling that you've had. It should be better because there's more of us.

I suppose in those days there was only him teaching and now there are lots more senior people around who can help people who are starting. When you teach now do you try and teach the way Sugano Sensei taught you or do you teach in a way that you've developed? Is his teaching style a model for what you do or do you do something different?

Yes it's both and sometimes I do things that I've picked up from other people as well. I use the model of demonstrating a technique that Sugano Sensei uses or was still using the last time I saw him and I think would still use. His method is to demonstrate a technique properly, forcefully first time (makes a bang with his hands to explain) everybody has seen it. Then usually he does it slowly and precisely. He breaks it down so that you can see what he is doing. Once he's done that it's another quick precise impact sort of demonstration (bangs with his hands again), wallop down they go and now you can train with each other. I think that's a good model for teaching Aikido technique. The people have to see the real thing at its most powerful, pass that on but then of course they're shown the intricacies of it. Because over the years your technique or your way of technique changes, your way of doing things changes. There are some things that I teach people now that I can remember having been taught by Sugano Sensei in Tasmania when I first saw him. But there would be as many things that I'd show from the last time I saw him because he's also developed that technique or something new. I know some of the techniques I do I've picked up from other people's ways that I like to do and added that and altered them to suit me so I might do that as well. So it's a mixture of all three but I'm conscious of an underlying core from what I've been shown by Sugano Sensei.

INTERVIEW WITH BOB HILL SENSEI BY JOHN WATSON

Also before you mentioned that at one of Chiba Sensei's intensives he said that the students there would probably forget the particular techniques he'd shown but that the most important thing was to remember the feeling of the movement. Do you think that ties in with the teaching method that you were just describing of Sugano Sensei showing the whole movement initially to try and give people the impression of what the whole movement was about rather than straight away going into technical details? Is that part of the same thing?

That's true but I think it's a bit more than that. What I've picked up and what I've been taught over the years is that Aikido is movement, not technique per se, and it's what you do at the point of contact that is what it's all about. Of course there has to be technique. There has to be control and so on, but at the point of contact there has to be movement and that's the starting point I think ...and I think initially I was certainly looking to see 'the technique' because that's the bit you have to practice....

It's the easy part to see!

Yes that's what you see and you try to emulate that. There's nothing wrong with that and you have to do that, but beyond that is the movement and that is what Sugano Sensei is teaching all the time and it probably took me a long time to realise that. Over the years he's pointed this out to us. Yes Aikido is movement, that you move at the point of contact that's where it starts from and once you learn to move then you have to move your whole body and he's always said that, 'move your whole body', and why are you doing that - because Aikido is movement. From the point of contact you have to move you can't just move your arm or leg, everything has to move.

Earlier you said that every time you thought that you had grasped something about Aikido Sugano Sensei would present it from a different position or show something different, not just in a physical sense but sometimes in a mental or conceptual sense.

Can you think of an example of where that might have happened rather than in a technical sense but in a conceptual sense or about attitude in Aikido?

I can think of a couple. The first is to do with my overall impression over the years that I've been training with Sugano Sensei. When I first met him and trained with him I was 16 and he was a 5th degree I think. I think I can speak for Tony and Keith and the others who went to Tasmania that weekend. We were just overwhelmed by this man. He was Japanese to start with, we'd been doing Japanese martial arts but we'd never seen a Japanese Sensei before. He was just so impressive. He was so far ahead of us, he was light years ahead of us. All right we knew a couple of things like how to fall over, but this man was so much in advance of us.

Watching other martial arts over the years I've seen say at the Caulfield Dojo, lots of Judo people particularly, and Karate, you see people advance and they seem to reach the level of their instructors. They get to that level, but there is a ceiling there. You participate in the competitions and the championships, you take the gradings, you climb the ladder but there's a top to the ladder. However, the last time I saw Sugano Sensei in Belgium 3 or 4 years ago under totally different circumstances, I was not a naive schoolboy anymore. I'd seen a bit of Aikido, and other people, and I got onto the mat and realised that the distance between Sugano Sensei and myself was exactly the same as when I first met him in 1967 (laughs)... I've progressed but he has as well. There's no top to the ladder of Aikido ... that's where I'm going - its way up there

somewhere. That realisation hit me in the eye ... what we're doing is the total picture of Aikido, what we're doing is not a sport, not a technical study, its a way, there's more to it, much more to it than that. The techniques unlock it for you that's all. Once you realise that they're just unlocking... they're teaching you how your body works how your mind works, how to live, beneath it all that's where it's all going.

The other example occurred when I was in Adelaide for a Summer School and we were getting some instruction from some sports people on warm-ups and so on and they did a good job of explaining to us how to warm up. It was perfectly sound physiological information. I was talking to Sensei afterwards, just chatting and I mentioned to him that I was very impressed with it, and that we were learning how to warm up before Aikido training and Sensei looked at me and said: "You don't need to warm up for Aikido - you should be ready all the time!"

That was a great lesson that Aikido is not a sport, it's not a lifestyle - it's living! You are ready for living all the time. You can find those things in the sayings of O-Sensei where he more or less said the same things but in his own language. You're not walking around in a state of alertness but you're relaxed, 'readiness' is what we're talking about and that is something that you can only learn from your own experiences. But for instance my own views of Aikido have changed. I looked back over the last few years and realised that I hadn't actually had any fights since I was at school, which is why I took to doing Aikido in the first place to fight, to defend myself but I'm still doing Aikido Why?

I think one reason I find interest in still doing it is that the real battles of my life are actually just coping with the day to day world that I live in. It's not a world full of samurai and gunslingers and people beating me up. But if you go to get in your car to drive somewhere you have to cope with traffic and road rage. I teach in schools and people are stressed and angry at times and other times they're happy. There's a huge variety of people you've got deal with in these situations. And

you've got to walk down crowded streets, go to the supermarket and deal with family situations.

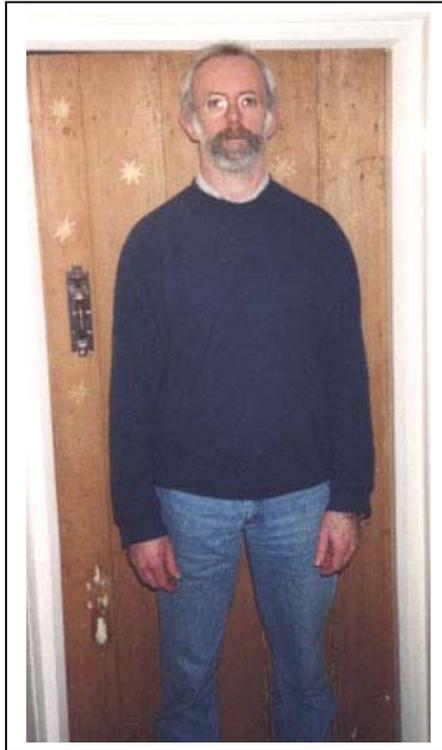
I think Aikido has taught me something about how to deal with these things. Living! That's my idea about what I've learned from Aikido, someone else might have a totally different idea of what they've learned from Aikido, but that's what I keep getting. The techniques have unlocked those things for me. It's a perspective of thinking about those things, it's a way of operating in the world that to me is Aikido. It's not as I was saying fighting per se, it's coping, it's adapting all I have been taught to my life situation.

Is that sometimes described by the phrase 'Aikido in every day life'?

Yes, it has been described like that but to me it's more...it's living...it's not sort of artificially applying Aikido, trying to make it fit.

So you're saying that you do that instinctively rather than thinking, 'relax and go with it'?

Yes over time that's what I've learned anyway. It's an absolutely personal idea. I'm not saying this is Aikido, but for me it's my Aikido. When I try to relax it doesn't work that's the military training. You have to learn to relax and that's a totally different thing and that's what Aikido unlocks. I've heard Yoga teachers put it the other way around that when you are doing Yoga techniques put your mind into your body and I think that's the same message as Aikido. I think maybe O-Sensei worked the other way. He was a very



physical person, as well as having very deep religious beliefs. I think he's come to the same sort of conclusion as yogis that your body and mind are the same thing - they have to work together. His approach was I think, starting with very hard physical things and out of that the body learns. It's not a matter of now telling yourself to relax, it's a matter of relaxing...and that's a hell of a thing to do!

Does that happen instinctively because of your training?

Instinctive, that's the word. Because you train you learn to relax. It's not terribly mystical either. It's just like driving a car. The first time you drive a car you grab the steering wheel so tight you've got white knuckles and you can't move your legs because you're so scared. After say five years, you can drive using one hand on the wheel with no problem at all.

It's the same sort of realisation that you're exactly the same person who was gripping the wheel five years earlier who couldn't move. You see people coming to their Aikido first lesson with hands and arms everywhere but five years later they're doing a Shodan grading and doing lovely technique because they've relaxed into their body. You start from the external and teach your body through hard training to relax into it.

Looking at the other end of Aikido the martial end is another semi-contentious issue. There's often discussion about how effective Aikido is as a martial art or whether it is a martial art or something else, could you comment on that? I mean is Aikido training about training as a martial art or is it about training something else?

For a lot of people it is about training as a martial art and that's fine. I've met people over the years and I train with people now who see it very much that way. They train to become very strong in technique and think about fighting situations because that's what is uppermost for them. Kanetsuka Sensei has even made a point of inviting renowned Karate Sensei to have seminars with him and the British Aikido Federation. He sends his students along to learn from them because he insists that if you want to learn to defend yourself against people who punch and kick, then go to people who know how to do it properly, then you will learn how to defend yourself properly. That is a perfectly sound point of view, so there is definitely that aspect to Aikido. It has to be there because that's Aikido's roots and that's where it comes from. At the same time what I was saying before is that for me I don't face those situations everyday. I hope that if I needed to I could do those things. I'm confident that I could, but to me Aikido is more. It stretches beyond that, which is not to say it's the way to go because it's different for everybody. But I have to cope with another world, which is the thing that I was talking about before. The stresses and strains of living for me - I can still apply my Aikido to those things. That's what I understand Aikido is, whereas others may say it's not at all, but I think it is. Sometimes when I'm in a stressful situation my mind actually goes to times when I've been doing things on the Aikido mat or for example sitting in the Blue Mountains in freezing conditions thinking "My God I wish this was over. Can we go to bed! Let's get out of here!" but sitting through it, and thinking I'm in a tough situation now, but I actually sat through those times in the Blue Mountains. I survived that, so I can survive anything. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I've picked up from Aikido.

Thank you very much for the interview.

Another point that Bob made earlier was the benefit of training under and being in contact with the senior students of Sugano Sensei, as they have much insight and knowledge to pass on from the many years of direct contact they have had with him. I certainly feel fortunate to have had the chance to speak with Bob Hill Sensei and would again like to thank him for his time and willingness to be interviewed.

Forget not the heart of the Beginner

Attributed to the great founder of Noh, Motokyu Zeami, "Forget not the heart of the beginner" should serve as an important lesson to all who train in a given "way".

There are three main meanings of this phrase that have been passed down over the ages.

First is the importance of never forgetting one's entry to training throughout one's entire life.

Second, is the importance of continuing to move ahead, regardless of how advanced one may become, while maintaining the pure heart of a beginner from one day to the next.

Third, is the importance of making what one has learned a part of oneself, and of being able to practice this at anytime anywhere.

(Extracted with kind permission from THE AIKIDO, Volume 32. No 2. Aikido World Headquarters newsletter. 1995.)

As part of the process of building a Bridge between Australia and New Zealand, Tony Smibert Sensei has been invited as a special guest to teach at a Gasshuku to be held in Christchurch, New Zealand, on August 11th and 12th, 2001.

For more info contact asc@aikido-chch.co.nz

As most readers are aware, Smibert Sensei is the most senior national instructor in Australia. As National Area Rep. (and Vice President of Aiki-Kai Australia) he is second in seniority to Sugano Shihan who is President and Founder of Aiki-Kai Australia. He is also a member of the Technical Teaching Committee. For those who have not yet experienced one of his seminars, they are in for a treat.

If you are thinking of going to Christchurch, it will be cold in August so take warm clothes. The students there will make you very welcome, and you will have such a good time that you will probably not notice the cold.

Does your dojo do anything special to commemorate the passing of O-Sensei?

I know that many dojos do something special each year. At Iwama, on the 29th of April, a Shinto ceremony is held at the Aiki Shrine in memory of the spirit of Morihei Ueshiba, O-Sensei.

In my own dojo on the Gold Coast we have a special ceremony which is our way of remembering O-Sensei

Morihei Ueshiba, O-Sensei, was the founder and originator of Aikido. He passed away during the morning of the 26th of April 1969. He was 86. I sincerely respect the legacy he has handed us through those Shihan who were his direct students. I continue to marvel at the limitless inventiveness of the techniques available to a person who has

can't see the time. We do some exercises to warm up and loosen the shoulders, some breathing to relax and calm the mind.

We then form a circle so everyone is facing everyone else. Morris Sensei begins with a count to 100. The count then passes to his right, from student to student until everyone in the circle has counted to 100, cutting shomen uchi to each count. We try to maintain a relaxed steady pace, not too slow or too fast. Once around the circle and we've done 1200 cuts.

Going round the second time is the hardest part. The pace begins to slow as people start to fatigue, becomes ragged as shoulders stiffen and hands perhaps begin to blister. Those using only muscle power will not make it. As we face each other, each of us inspires the other to keep

A Special opportunity to remember O-Sensei

By John Litchen

an open mind and no preconceived idea of what technique to do at any given moment.

Unfortunately, for many new students of Aikido, the picture of O-Sensei in the dojo is just something they bow to. Many of them don't give it any thought. They take their bows at the start of class (without giving much thought to that either) then get on with their practice.

I'm excited by the idea that each dojo should do something once a year to commemorate the anniversary of the death of O-Sensei. This would be a special reminder to the students of the person who created Aikido and why he created this art we all so diligently practice.

O-Sensei was a deeply religious person who transcended two eras in Japanese history. The time of War and conquest at the end of a feudal society, and a time of war and defeat, and the subsequent era of peace that has prevailed through our present time. Aikido encompassed these two periods and this is reflected in the way it is taught and practiced around the world by the older and the younger Shihan.

As I understand it, one of the things O-Sensei did at one stage of his life was to spend a good part of each night in the mountains and the forests furiously practicing Suburi with his bokken. This went on for quite some time, as he no doubt integrated movements of the sword into the martial art forming within his body and mind. This practice is reflected in the direct irimi movements in most Aikido techniques.

At our dojo on the Gold Coast we practice Suburi with a bokken to honour this legacy from O-Sensei. We hold a special training night on the Monday or the Wednesday nearest to the 26th of April. This evening's practice consists of doing 3000 or more suburi with a bokken.

Each year the numbers vary but the average is about 12 dedicated people. The clock is turned to the wall so we

going. We force ourselves to relax, to keep the cutting fluid, to isolate our minds from our bodies with the monotonous counting over and over to 100. Who will falter? Who will drop out?

I seem to become disembodied, to float beyond the pain barrier. By the time we have reached 2000 cuts everyone has achieved an ease which allows each of us to continue. We have all gone past the pain barrier, and the last 1000 cuts seem to flow smoothly. There is an exhilaration flooding through the dojo. Suddenly the pace picks up and with joy we fly through the final counts and no one wants to stop. Sensei calls out one more hundred and we count loudly in unison as we complete an extra 100 cuts.

It's done! We do some stretching and warm down exercises. The clock is turned back and only an hour has passed. To finish the session we toast O-Sensei with Sake followed with a few cold beers, some Japanese crackers, nuts and other nibbles while Sensei tell stories of his earlier training days.

The end result of this ceremonial practice of Suburi is that everyone has this wonderful feeling of camaraderie, and of achievement which carries over into enthusiasm for training that lasts quite a while.

I'm not suggesting that every dojo should do what we do. There are many ways to commemorate the legacy O-Sensei left us, but if you are on the Gold coast at this time in April, please feel free to come and join us in our remembering of the passing of O-Sensei. You will be most welcome.

“A Personal View” – continued from page 3.

I often hear that as you progress in Aikido, it becomes effortless. That’s not right. I have found that Aikido always requires effort. Lots of effort, and commitment both mental and physical.

Aikido gives its best to you if you are committed.

A Quiet Moment.

Finally, let me share with you a nice personal moment from the 2001 Summer School. As I was waiting for a lift to the airport to go back home I was standing under a big tree. I reached up and touched a leaf. The sunshine made the leaf feel soft and warm. I enjoyed the imagery of the tree’s life spreading up from its roots, through its branches and connecting to me standing on the same ground under the same sun. It was a happy moment.

When we begin Aikido training we spend a lot of time trying to figure out what works and what will keep us from harm. We need help and guidance. But eventually there are moments, often quite unexpectedly, in which we are simply happy.

The following people attended Summer School.

Aitken Matt, Albert Wendy, Alberti Renato, Armfield Steve, Atkinson Bill, Atkinson Tony, Banhazi Thomas, Barnes Richard, Barouline Vaitchoslav, Barrell Ross, Basyoni Walled, Belder Hans, Bell David, Bilson Mark, Birnbauer Bill, Brown David, Budden Tim, Buic Steve, Kagetsu, Camilleri Alfred, Camilleri Sophie, Chandler Greg, Chandra Yustianto, Cherryh Jamie, Choo Juliet, Chun wing & Crogan Yvonne and Patrick, Cinco Alan, Cornwall John, Cosby Russell, Coulston Chris, Cuming Terence, Davie Robert, Dennis Jeremy, Dinan Margaret, Dugan Jeff, Dugan Jesse, Dziedic Andrew, Edgley Brett, Etter Asher Vivienne, Farrer Cathy, Feros Julie, Ford Barry, Freeman Geoff, Friganiotis Phil, Frink Carina, Fripp Guy, Gilberts Jackie, Godfrey Linda, Goh Julia, Gordon Andrew, Goulde Lou, Grace Charmaine, Gulbis Jackie, Hansen John, Hathaway Craig, Henderson Kathryn, Hutchison Chris, Huth Donald, James Austen, Janiv Hanan, Jenkins Kaye, Johns Brian, Kai Naoko, Karabin John, Karas John, Kitayama Gotaro, Kolb David, Laidsaar Eino, Lampport Gilbert, Lightbody Peter, Litchen John, Little Ian, Lo George, Lo Matthew, Macqueen Ashley, Margetts Anna, Matcott Mark, McCarthy Kathy, Metwally Magdy, Metzeling Leon, Moffat Dennis, Moline Matthew, Morris Aaryn, Morris Graham, Nagle Michael, Nesbitt Chloe, Newland Paul, Noble Grant, Oldman Ray, Oldmeadow Julian, Ottmann Goetz, Parker Tom, Pascoe Brendon, Percy Mark, Pedler Ray, Petery Mike, Priest John, Prydon Rob, Revitt Vivian, Reymond Benoit (Satyavan), Riad Rafash, Robertson James, Roessel JV, Rose Surmani, Rosos Lynford, Ross Andrew, Salo Stephen J, Sandilands David, Sankarankutty Shobha, Savage Roger, Savage Geoff, Sayers Jacques, Scott David, Searle Stephen, Searle Stephen, Shaw Bruce, Sheils Machiko, Sheils Wayne, Sickert Christina, Sickert Susan, Sinkinson Paul, Smibert Tony, Spry Warren, Stettler Roland, Stevenson Duncan, Sugano Jikou, Summerhayes Kris, Szilagyi Dezi, Telford Christopher, Thornton Stephen, Tomlinson Kim, Treyde Ruth, Turner Mark, van Papenrecht Liz, Walton Greg, Warr George (Nyima), Watanabe Hiroaki, Watanabe Nozomu, Watson Alan, Watson John, White Earl, Williamson Andrew, Wishart Roewen, Youssefi Charles

(Thanks to Janiv Sensei, and all of the people he had helping.)

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