

合気道



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AIKIDO AUSTRALIA

Special 40th Anniversary Newsletter

Summer School Souvenir

For those of us who have been fortunate enough to have
attended seminars taken by Doshu Ueshiba Moriteru — with Doshu
visiting Auckland, New Zealand, last March (2005) and Melbourne,
Australia, this January (2006) — these last 12 months have been a
remarkable time.

For me, what stands out most in comparison to the often seen
differences exhibited by other great teachers — differences because of
their physique, their mental and philosophical concepts of what they
are teaching and their personalities, all of which colour their Aikido
to varying degrees — is that Doshu is reserved and quiet, almost
understated, with movement that is fluid, continuous, and absolutely
precise. To see him demonstrate is a wonderful experience.

This is not to say he is better than the great teachers who
studied directly with the Founder, he is different, in that I think he tries
not to colour his Aikido with his own personality or idiosyncrasies. I
feel that like his father before him (Doshu Kisshomaru) he is trying
to maintain a line directly from the Founder to the present day that
maintains as nearly as possible a purity of form and structure for all
aikidoka to see and refer to. Perhaps for this reason at these seminars
he focuses on basic Tai Sabaki and the core techniques which underlie
everything we do in Aikido. That he does this so elegantly and
beautifully is a great credit to him.

I hope those who couldn't attend Doshu's recent visits to our
part of the world will get some idea of what Doshu was like from the
images and reports presented in this publication.

There are far too many photos to include anywhere near all of
them in this issue, so from time to time in future issues more pictures
will appear and these will, I hope, remind all who were there what a
fantastic school it was.

The organisers deserve all the praise we can give them.
John Litchen.



The editor with Doshu after his last class on Sunday morning.

Doshu Ueshiba Moriteru



Yamada Yoshimitsu Shihan



Sugano Seiichi Shihan





Summer School Report - Part One - by John Litchen

This school had two sections and was longer than the 'normal' school because of the participation over the last three days of our special guests, Doshu Ueshiba Moriteru and Yamada Yoshimitsu Shihan.

From the beginning the numbers attending were higher than usual and included many international visitors who came over to help celebrate the 40th anniversary. By the time Doshu and Yamada Shihan were due to arrive, accompanied by Sugano Shihan, the numbers attending had swelled to almost 400. This would make it the biggest national school so far to be held in Australia.

There was a feeling of excitement in the air as people started lining up, waiting for Doshu, and Yamada Shihan to arrive. They were of course accompanied by Sugano Shihan and several senior members of Aiki-Kai Australia.

Many of those lined up in the photo below had never taken classes by any of our special guests and this was something they were all looking forward to even though it was obvious that the crowded mats would not allow for expansive or flamboyant technique.

The heat also promised to be a problem, and earlier during the week attendees had been cautioned to maintain fluid levels and proper nutrition. This warning was again repeated since the temperature had become a lot warmer creeping up to 40 plus on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Sunday in particular was extraordinarily hot with a top of 44 degrees. Even so, everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and the training, and although there were some small accidents resulting in minor bruises and injuries, it did not seem that anyone was adversely affected by the heat.

Doshu explains at the beginning of his first class what aspects of Aikido he will focus on during the three days to follow.





Someone said that no matter how far you travel you always end in the same place. This describes perfectly and in more ways than one, my journey across time and space, back to Melbourne from the UK, to celebrate the first 40 years of Aikido in Australia.

For me the trip began, in a way, in May of 2005 at the Crystal Palace sports centre in London, at a similar celebration for the 50th anniversary of the legendary Kenshiro Abbe Sensei introducing Aikido to Britain. (The story of his first meeting O'Sensei can be found in Susan Perry's book, *Remembering O'Sensei*.) I went to this event because of its significance in the history of Aikido in Britain and also because Abbe Sensei had an indirect influence on my beginning aikido all those years ago in Melbourne. Arthur Moorshead, a world class judoka and budo man was a very close student of Abbe Sensei (virtually his uchideshi). He also had learned some Aikido from Tadashi Abe Sensei, in France in the 1950s. Arthur began teaching a form of Aikido based on what he had learned in Europe and the books of Koichi Tohei Sensei, in Melbourne in the mid 1960s. Tony Smibert, David Brown, Peter Yost, myself and others thus were introduced to Aikido through Arthur and I shall be eternally grateful to him for that.

More to the point and more importantly, through Arthur we got our first introduction to Sugano Sensei and the Aikido of O'Sensei, which is what I came to Melbourne to celebrate.

The last national event I had attended in Australia was fifteen years ago. It was wonderful to see so many people in the dojo and to see so many who I remembered and who remembered me. Folks I had practised with decades ago made themselves known. Inevitably, there were gaps in the ranks, however, these places had been filled by so many more people who I had never seen before but training in the same spirit. I felt I was very much among old friends and I would like to thank everyone for making me welcome.

Another important aspect of the event for me was meeting up with Sugano Sensei's students who I have got to know in Europe. It's like two branches of the same family. In addition, there were those from Asia and New

You always end in the same place ...

Bob Hill started his Aikido training in Melbourne about the same time Sugano Shihan arrived in Australia. Not long after, as did several other Aikido enthusiasts from Melbourne, he moved to Sydney where he could study and train full time with Sugano Shihan.

Eventually a career move took Bob and his family to England where he still lives and works.

He continues to train and study Aikido, making frequent visits to Europe whenever Sugano Shihan is teaching there. And because of this he is as well known with Sensei's students in Europe as he is with many of the senior students here in Australia.

Doshu, above, and Sugano Shihan, below, commencing their classes with tai sabaki movements incorporating stetching.



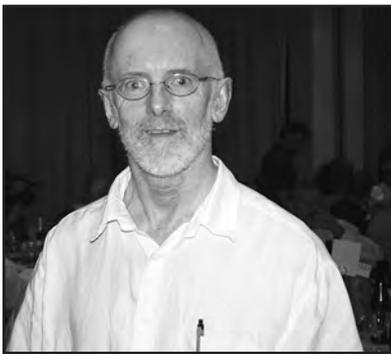
Sugano Shihan:

Ushiro Rietotori Haishin Undo



Zealand, all of us bringing cultural differences and other life experiences on to the mat. It brought home to me that while Aikido has spread geographically teachers like Sugano Sensei have instilled and maintained a unified spirit. It is interesting to see slight technical differences between Europe and Australasia but there is no discernible difference in the underlying idea that we are not in the dojo to compete, but to practise together.

... by Bob Hill (UK) Godan.



Yet another aspect was the teaching of Doshu Moriteru who showed us the immediate future of Aikido. A much more confident and self assured man than I remember him from his first visit to Melbourne, he clearly has a vision of where Aikido is going and his place in that. I would venture the opinion that no one on the planet could better his demonstration of suwari waza and hanmi hantachi. And, who else could say simply, "That's suwari waza"? What else could he say? What else could we do but applaud?

For me the days spent in Melbourne were a reaffirmation of what I have come to understand aikido to be. While historically interesting, the replication of pre-war aikido at Crystal Palace showed just how Aikido has changed. The technical and spiritual gap between what we did at Crystal Palace and what we did in Melbourne is enormous. It brings to mind Yamada Sensei's anecdote (recorded in Perry's book) about O'Sensei asking some students he saw practising old techniques: "Why do you think I have spent so much time perfecting the art?" Practising as I do often with aikidoka who have not have the opportunity to study aikido under O'Sensei's own students and for whom Aikido is primarily techniques, I appreciate more and more the transmission of the underlying principles of Aikido from O'Sensei's students. It is more than worth it to travel half-way around the world to learn from these men. When you come away you realise the challenge of being their student and the responsibility you have to pass on what you have been shown.

Although I have practised under all the Sensei who taught us many times before, I learnt yet again that every time you step on the tatami it is different and that it just gets better. I look forward to the 50th anniversary.

Bob Hill.



Gyaku Hanmi Katatetori Koryu Ho



Summer School Report -

The summer school commenced with Sugano Shihan taking a special one day course for yudansha who are instructors as well as for those who are likely to be instructing soon.

During the two classes in the morning it seemed to me that Sensei concentrated on fundamental concepts as he sees them, and outlined in detail a number of important aspects that we need to be focussed on during training. He spoke of the different levels of awareness and levels of training in much more detail than he has previously done.

I believe he said there were 3 different body positions, one of which is transitory, 3 levels of training and it seemed to me that he explained clearly the difference between beginning, intermediate, and advanced training, 3 levels of awareness, (2 being specific and one being general), and 3 levels of response to any attack. There isn't space here to expand on this, but in future newsletters and other publications, with the assistance of some senior people I am hoping the things Sensei spoke of will be more delineated.

Sensei had us practice specific techniques as examples of what he was explaining, and I think he made it quite clear what it was he expected of us as instructors.

Among the many things he spoke of was that focussing only on technique over the years would makes us very good at technique but





part two - by John Litchen

not necessarily good at Aikido, and that our Aikido would be empty, and devoid of content. What we need to focus on are the principles from which technique develops, that through technique we study principles, and through the principles we gain an understanding of Aikido. He said a lot more than that but that is my brief recollection.

I think, as an afterthought he explained that the various back stretches we practice during warming up exercises are not back stretches, but rather a means of studying our connection with the Earth and the point of balance where the connection is about to be lost. If anything got stretched it was our thighs and possibly the stomach.

The afternoon sessions focussed on bokken exercises at the start, and later on exercises more specific to the Go-no-ken and other forms he is teaching.

The actual summer school commenced on Tuesday with Sensei taking both morning sessions and the first one in the afternoon. Following the pattern established on Monday, Sensei's afternoon session focussed on weapons, this time with Jo, and Jo against Bokken.

Tony Smibert Sensei took the second class for the afternoon, followed by a class taken by one of Sensei's most senior students from Belgium, Louis Van Thiegham Sensei, which was most interesting for some variations he taught relating to kaitenage from chudan tsuki. The beauty of having classes taken by other very senior students of Sensei is to see his lineage reflected through the different personalities of his students. It was clear who their teacher was, but it was also clear that each of them had made what they did unique to themselves.

Wednesday morning was much the same as the day before. Dan grading tests were to be taken in the afternoon.

Thursday afternoon was free for sightseeing. The morning classes were taken by Hanan Janiv Sensei and Louis Van Thiegham Sensei from Belgium. Sugano Sensei and a number of other senior people went out to the airport to welcome Doshu and Yamada Shihan who both arrived that morning. Takase Shihan also arrived that afternoon. On Friday as was expected a lot of extra people were there ready for the three days with Doshu, Yamada Shihan Sugano Shihan, with invited guests Takase Shihan, Ken Cottier Shihan, Louis Van Thiegham Sensei also taking classes at various times. It was very crowded and we often worked in groups, but it was most interesting and thought provoking training.



Karol Zappeij Sensei





The venue for the official dinner party was downtown at a major hotel in Exhibition street. The special function room we used was very hot and humid with the air conditioning hardly having any noticeable effect because there were simply too many people squeezed into too small a space, but to give them credit, it was an extraordinarily hot night outside anyway being above 30 degrees and humid so air conditioning anywhere would have struggled to cope; nevertheless everyone had a great time.

As expected, after dinner there were a number of speeches with Doshu first (translated by Machiko Hirata) followed by Yamada Shihan and of course Sugano Shihan. It was Tony Smibert Sensei's role to conclude by thanking everyone for attending and our guests for being there to help us celebrate the event.

Gifts were given to our distinguished guests and to Sugano Shihan and, by a now establish tradition, these were presented by the newest member of Aiki-Kai Australia present at the event, Raymond Barnes from Sydney, who delighted in giving the gifts and having his photo taken with each guest. A moment he will long remember.

There was music, a wonderful didgeridoo, shakuhachi, mouth organ improvisational piece to start the proceedings before the band got going. After that there was dancing with Sugano Shihan being enticed onto the floor right the start and mingling and lots of photos taken by many different people. Quite a memorable night!



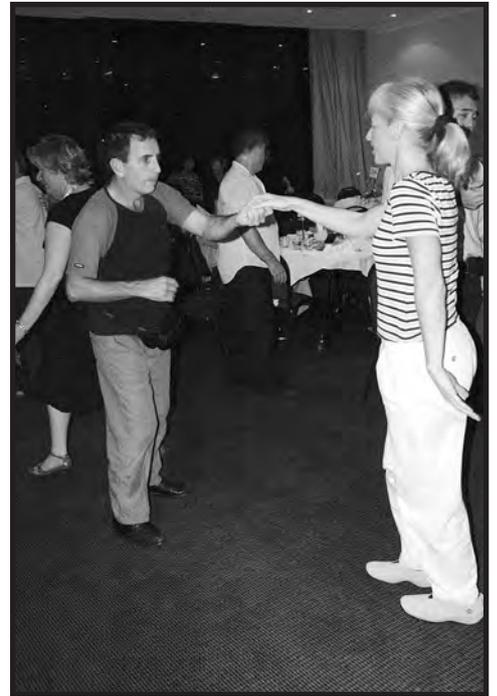
The Smibert family with Yamada Shihan.



David Brown
Shakuhachi

Mathew Moline
Mouth Organ





Above top: Sensei showing how it is done, Michael and Peta dancing,

Ken Cottier dancing with Carmel,

The three Andrews!
Andrew Ross, Andrew Dziedzic and Andrew Williamson
The editor, with Takase Shihan and Wamiko,

Kevin Allen and Irene Williamson.





Raymond Barnes presenting Gifts

祝辞

合気道道主 植芝 守央

オーストラリア合気会が40周年を迎えられましたことを、心からお慶び申し上げます。

オーストラリア合気会がこのように盛大に40周年を迎えることができましたのも、菅野誠一師範が40年前にオーストラリアに道場を創立されて以後、師範を中心に多くの方々が長年にわたりご尽力されたこと、会員の皆さんの合気道に対する情熱、そして日ごろの精進の賜物であると思います。

合気道は、1950年代末に日本国内外への普及が始まり、今では欧米を中心に東南アジア、アフリカ、中東、中南米など世界86か国にまでその裾野を広げております。オーストラリア合気会の発展がこのような世界的普及発展の一助となっています。

こうした流れの中で、この40周年を契機として50年、60年と、オーストラリア合気会がますます隆盛されますことを祈念してお祝いの言葉とさせていただきます。

Above: Doshu's speech Next page: Translation of Doshu's Speech.



Sugano Shihan with Bob Botterill Sensei.



Ray Pedler and friend from Hong Kong.

Sugano Shihan and Tony Smibert Sensei receiving a special scroll commemorating Aiki-Kai Australia's 40th Anniversary, presented by Dr. Kok Weng Leong of the Malaysian Aikido Association.



With great pleasure and satisfaction I would like to deliver my sincere congratulations to you on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Aiki-Kai Australia.

This is an accomplishment attained by the efforts made by Sugano Shihan, who established the first Aikido dojo in Australia 40 years ago, and by many other Aikidokas who have passionately made unstinted devotion and contribution from day to day to the development of Aikido in Australia.

At the end of 1950 the propagation of Aikido started in Japan as well as overseas. Nowadays, in 86 countries, including the countries of North America and Europe, being the leading big powers of Aikido, South East Asia, Africa, Middle East and Central and South America, Aikido is continuously expanding its range of activity. The development of Aiki-Kai Australia also sustains one corner of the World Aikido.

I do expect that Aiki-Kai Australia, in the said trend, will further continue to develop, with its 40th anniversary as a new jumping off point towards the flourishing, 50 years, 60 years and so on, of Aikido in Australia.

Doshu

Moriteru Ueshiba



Dave Robinson, Craig Tribolet, David Ashard, Allan Ashard - Very Happy having a photo taken with Doshu.

We've always believed that this newsletter should contain articles of lasting interest and information. Mike Clarke, author and journalist, was a special guest as Summer school. Over the years Mike has published a number of articles about Sugano Shihan and our organisation in many different publications.

As a result of his attendance there will be a series of articles running in Blitz Magazine (the first to appear this April) with others to follow during the year.

We feel Mike's personal story, insights into Budo, and perspective on Aikido fits the criteria of lasting interest and is well worthy of our anniversary issue.



Looking in from Outside

Bohdi McSweeney interviews Mike Clarke

Please tell me about yourself?

Well, I have been married for twenty-one years to Kathy, and we live [quietly] high on a ridge overlooking a bend in the river Tamar, and backing on to the Gorge Reserve in Launceston, Tasmania. I was born in Dublin, Ireland, in May 1955, and moved with my family to England when I was around three years old. I grew up in a very tough inner-city neighbourhood of Manchester and had, as I recall, a poor [financially] but idyllic [i.e. filled with love and laughter] childhood. My dad worked seven days a week as an engineer on the railway, and my mum struggled to keep seven kids clothed and fed, and out of mischief. She succeeded, for the most part, in accomplishing the first two though I have to say that, in my case anyway, both my parents were fighting an up hill battle when it came to keeping me and trouble from making each other's acquaintance.

All went reasonable well until I left school and developed an appetite for fighting. I'm still unsure as to why I chose to deal with my problems through violence I can only say now that I was frustrated on many levels and had very little sense of direction in life back then. These days I understand just how important a sense of direction is to one's personal wellbeing, and the role it plays in taking responsibility for the life we live. Removing a person's sense of direction [in life] is enough to cause all sorts of emotional and mental problems. So, there I was, 17 years old, not unintelligent but poorly educated, and from where I was standing, not much choice in what I could do with my future. Two days before my 18th birthday I found myself sitting, handcuffed, in an armoured bus on my way to prison!

I have written about my experiences inside in my first book, *Roaring Silence*. I have also explained how it was almost by accident that I stumbled on to karatedo shortly after my release. I did not have a sudden revelation that I had been a bad person and needed to change my ways. Rather, while incarcerated I came to understand perhaps for the first time, that it was up to me to provide the kind of life I wanted to live. Ever since that time, I have done my best to focus on this idea. Now, this may seem at first to be a selfish or perhaps a narcissistic approach to life, but my idea has never focussed on me. You see, I want to be liked, loved even, but above all I hope to be content. I believe and have come to understand, that such positive things will only come my way when I give these things to others. Only by giving will I receive.

Sounds a bit religious, doesn't it? But I don't think it is, and I should point out that I don't give in order to receive either. There is a sense of balance and perception that has to be developed, and that in its self is one almighty learning curve. However, in a very Zen like way, as soon as I stopped trying to learn how to do it, and just started doing it, things began to fall into place. Such wisdom defies any and all attempts to package it, and those who lay claim

to ownership of such wisdom, I find, tend to miss the point and spend their lives going off at tangents - each one more important than the last, and each one leading them further away from the simplistic truth.

Since January 1974 I have trained in karatedo, for the first ten years practising the Japanese style known as Shito-ryu. In January 1984 I travelled to Okinawa for the first time to enter the dojo of Higaonna sensei. A master of goju-ryu karatedo who is known throughout the karate world for his tough training methods and the demanding requirements placed on those who train at his dojo.

I began writing for martial arts magazines in England in 1984, and since then have been fortunate enough to meet and interview many senior teachers, the most recent of course being the current Doshu and Yamada shihan. Meeting Sugano shihan for the first time several years ago has given me an opportunity to talk with him on a number of different occasions, and I must say, he is one of the most impressive teachers I have ever met. Also, meeting people like Tony Smibert sensei has opened up lines of thought in my mind that I may never have explored had our paths not crossed.

What attracted you to your particular martial art?

I can't say I was "attracted" to karatedo. Back in 1974 most people in the Western world would have been hard pushed to know the difference between one martial art and another. I discovered karatedo within weeks of my release from prison. Some friends were already training and I thought I would take a look, and perhaps even give the instructor a bit of a "Slap!" Now don't forget, back then I had spent the previous couple of years fighting in the streets, in pubs, clubs and at soccer matches. I had a string of convictions for violence and had just served time for G.B.H. [Grievous Bodily Harm]. My opinion of my self as a fighter in those days was extremely high.

As long as I live, I will be forever thankful that the dojo I walked into was the dojo of Mr Vickers, a teacher who took an arrogant brat like me and, by example, taught me to see the world differently. He was never boastful, nor did he display the full extent of his abilities just to impress people. In many ways he was, and still is, a very normal person. My idea of giving him a "Slap" soon vanished when I saw him sparring with some of his senior students on that first night in the dojo. Thankfully I was smart enough to realize I had stumbled upon something I knew could help me. Though I had no idea at that time what Budo was, I felt something [an opportunity] was standing in front of me, and all I had to do was summon up enough nerve to reach out and grab it. Little did

I know then of the journey I would take through life as a result of entering the dojo on that bleak winter's evening.

Would you please tell me about this art?

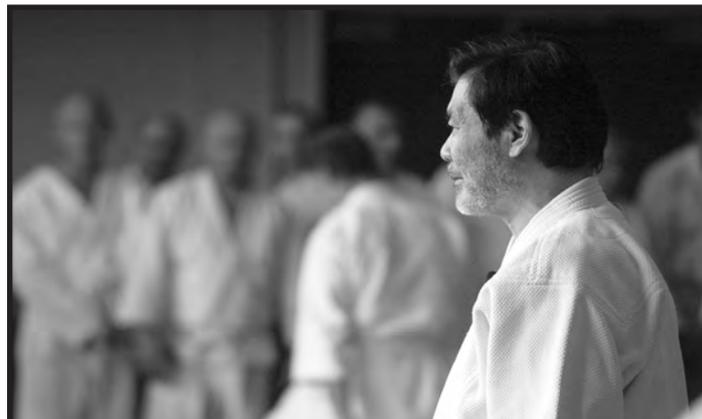
That's a difficult question to answer. Actually, it would be easier to tell you what karatedo isn't! You see karatedo, like all other forms of budo, has to be experienced in order to be understood. One has to "feel" it in order to understand it, and words, no matter how eloquently put together, can not convey what karatedo is. Of course, there are the physical techniques, the punching, kicking and blocking. The trapping the tripping and the chocking, the avoiding, the blending and the entering, and the disturbing of another persons balance in order to manipulate them, but even if one were to master all of this, one might still miss out on, and therefore misunderstand, just what karatedo actually "is". Like balancing on a bike, or floating on water, only experience can teach us what any form of budo is. Before we can feel these things, no amount of words can explain them. Once we can feel them, no more words are necessary.

The art of karatedo originates from the main island of the Ryukyu archipelago, Okinawa, in the South China Sea between the southern tip of Japan, and the northern tip of Taiwan. It is a defensive civilian art that grew from a need for the indigenous population to defend themselves against the aggression of the Japanese occupation force: specifically the samurai of the Satsuma clan in 1602. Later, with the gradual integration of the Ryukyu kingdom into the Japanese nation, Karatedo [China-hand-way] evolved into a system of self-defence against rouges and villains. Over the years three "traditions" of karatedo came to categorise the main principles being used. Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te, so named because of the towns in which these traditions were concentrated, Shuri, the royal capital, Naha, the commercial capital, and Tomari, the largest port on the island. Today, these three traditions have given rise to many different ryu or "schools" of karatedo and the school I follow, goju-ryu [strong and gentle school] came from the Naha-te tradition.

Around 1922, Okinawan sensei began teaching karatedo in Japan, and since that time many "new" schools have been founded. These schools fell into line with the indigenous Japanese martial arts. The kanji used to write karatedo was changed in order to remove the Chinese influence [modern kanji is translated as: empty-hand-way], and the do-gi, belt, and the dan ranking system everyone is familiar with today was adopted. Before this time do-gi, belts and ranks did not exist on Okinawa, and one was only considered an "expert" when people could see it in you. Miyagi Chojun Sensei, the founder of goju-ryu once said: "A black belt will not give you skill, if you have the skill, there is no need for the belt." Consequently, even though the training was harder and the experience much deeper and more profound back then, there were a lot less people willing to proclaim their achievement. How different the martial arts are these days, with seemingly every Tom, Dick and Harry, only too willing to tell you how wonderful they are!

Budo karatedo is a journey undertaken by an individual, a pilgrimage that will lead them to discover their true potential and their true self, but only if they enter deeply. Splashing about in the shallows will do nothing if one is looking for the answers found at the bottom of the ocean. On Okinawa there is a saying well known in the karate dojo throughout the island: "No matter what may lie behind you, or what may lay ahead, nothing compares to that which lies within. I think this captures the essence of karatedo, and budo, very well. It is simple, uncomplicated, and yet, extremely difficult to live up to.

You have interviewed Sugano Shihan three times now, the Doshu and Yamada Shihan too. You have also published interviews with Tony Smibert Sensei and others, and written a number of times about aikido in various magazines, what is it about aikido that interests you?



The things I find interesting about aikido are the same things I find interesting about karatedo and all other forms of budo. I am attracted to the journey some people make with the art, and fascinated by the way others train for years and never seem to take a single step forward. At the recent summer school it was fairly easy to see those who were following their teacher, walking a path, and searching for something inside themselves. Those who were looking for something else, who were looking outside themselves in order to collect something "new" to add to their aikido, were also very noticeable.

I have been very lucky to meet some wonderful people through aikido, and given the start I had with those I met early on, I'm very glad I did not write the art off [as so many do] as a bunch of individuals trying their best to intellectualise conflict management. Just as the word karate summons up images of testosterone laden young men hell bent on bashing people's heads in, aikido suffers from an image of overly educated middle aged folk who swirl around in a skirt, and take a dive rather than hang around to be thrown. Clearly, it is a great mistake to generalize the followers of either art in this way, nevertheless, many people do. Like all martial arts, what we see in the dojo is often only the tiny tip of a very large iceberg.

On a physical level I like to see how aikido solves certain problems regarding incoming force, distancing and timing. I enjoy watching the flow that people produce and how, with so little reliance on strength, some people can redirect another persons attack and manipulate them into a position that resolves the conflict and brings an end to the attack, again, a common theme that underpins the ideals found in traditional karatedo. We are limited somewhat by our physical bodies, but our minds are able to take us to places few would think possible. When I watch people who understand aikido, I sometimes catch a glimpse of such places, and this gives me encouragement to try and find those same places within me.

One cannot practise a martial art at its deeper levels, if one relies solely upon strength and fitness. While elements of these are necessary, they amount to only a small percentage of what allows a person to find the internal key that opens the door to real understanding. Is it any wonder then that budo, in all its forms, is a life long challenge?

Finally, is there anything you would like to comment on regarding the martial arts?

continued on page 17



With so many on the mats training had to be extremely focussed with everyone aware of the limited space available. Practicing in groups allowed for more expansive training.



Sugano Shihan spoke, at the recent summer school, about taking aikido out of the box of “martial arts”, and how, in order to do this, one must find a different mental approach or, mindset, to training. He told me, in conversation, that O’Sensei’s idea of aikido was not based on just making another kind of martial art. For him, aikido was an entity in it’s own right, aikido “was” aikido, and not just another way of fighting with someone. He said: “The problem with understanding aikido only as a martial art is that it has limits, and once you see aikido as a martial art, you can never get past them.”

When he spoke of this I understood that this was the “Do” of budo, and that this “martial arts mindset” was the very thing that holds many of us back from discovering the true value inherent in our involvement with budo. After all, if the training we do is not as useful outside the dojo, as we live our lives, as it is to us inside, as we enjoy our practise, then what is the point of all our efforts? Why bother to make sacrifices, risk injury, and spend many thousands of dollars over a protracted period of time? Surely we do all this for deeper reasons than the acquisition of a dan rank!

There are a great many excellent budoka within Aiki-Kai Australia, and it has been a great pleasure for me to have met, at least a few of them over the past several years. During the 2006 summer school I had a chance to re-new old acquaintances and to meet some people for the first time. In a very small way, I was a little envious of the fortunate situation the Aiki-Kai members are in. You have a whole host of senior teachers to help you make progress, and then, you have a teacher like Sugano Shihan too! The students at my dojo only have me. My Sensei lives in Okinawa and I have to find creative ways of raising enough funds to visit him whenever I can. To think that he could visit me here in Australia once every six months, as Sugano Shihan does, would be like a win on the Lotto.

So, I really hope everyone understands the fortunate position they are in.

I would like to thank everyone who made my week in Melbourne so welcoming. In particular Tony Smibert Sensei for his invitation, Barry Ford for his immeasurable logistical assistance and good humour, Machiko Sensei for her help in translating my questions to Doshu, and his answers back to me, John Litchen for his masterful use of the camera and enhancing my magazine work of late. Also to those people who took the time to stop and chat, shared a meal or a taxi, or just said “G’day!” I thank you too. Finally, and before I run the risk of sounding like one of Tony Sensei’s speeches, I would like to thank Sugano Shihan for the time he has always been willing to give me over the years. Though he is not my Sensei, I have learnt a good deal from him since our first meeting, and he has been a great example, to me, of what is possible when we leave the “martial arts” behind, and pursue the true spirit of budo.

Mike Clarke, March 2006.



We have often published a list of National School attendees; this time because there were so many, to fill a large space with a list of names seemed inappropriate. Instead, a list of those who graded is printed here, with a photo of everyone getting ready for the official photo. Thanks to Michael Gauci for permission to use this image. Congratulations to all those people listed here who successfully graded.

Nidan

- Nick Archbold WA
- Allan Ashard Qld
- Andrew Last Vic
- Jerry Lim Vic
- Sam Penna Vic
- Satyavan Reymond WA
- Mark Turner Vic

Shodan

- Osvaldo Brandariz Vic
- Russell Clarke Tas
- Adrienne Cleaver Vic
- Matt Cochrane NSW
- Peter Cook Vic
- John Croser Qld
- Christine Elliott Tas
- Michael Gauci Qld
- Darko Hajzler Vic
- David L. Hall Vic
- Kevin Ivory Tas
- Bradley Lane Vic
- William Newham WA
- Patrick O’Regan Qld
- Luke Percy Qld
- Sarah Richards Tas
- Scott Seymour ACT
- Catherine Strong ACT
- Matthew Vanko Tas
- David Whyatt WA

Rokudan

- David Brown Vic
- Roger Savage NSW

Godan

- Michael De Young Vic
- Bob Hill UK
- Machiko Hirata NSW
- Brian Johns NT
- John Karas Tas
- Leon Metzeling Vic
- Wayne Sheils NSW

Sandan

- Kathryn Henderson ACT
- Robert Prydon Qld
- Duncan Stevenson ACT
- Frank Stranieri Vic



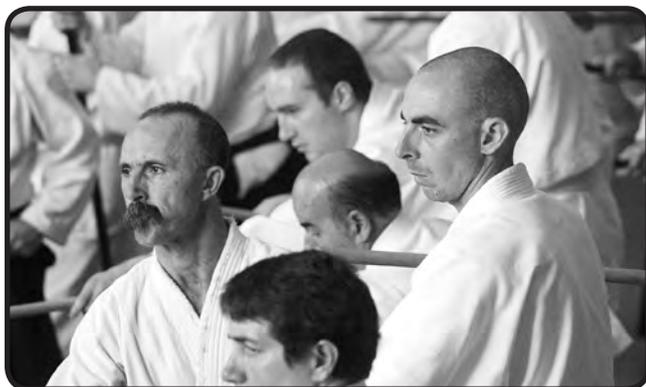
Stretching.



Hanan Janiv Sensei



Mark Matcott focussing intently.



David Scott Sensei.



A Constant Effort to keep Aikido afloat.

In every State and Territory there is a constant effort to build and maintain facilities so we all have a place where we can train.

At the end of 2004 the southern part of Queensland was hit by an incredible rainstorm. Water cascaded off the hills around Burleigh, filling storm water drains until they burst, with the overflow flooding streets in the shopping centre and surrounding areas. In 12 hours during the night and early morning more than a half a metre of rainwater fell across the Gold Coast. Cars floated down streets, basement parks were inundated, and wide areas of flat land stayed under a metre of muddy swirling water for several hours. The weather bureau claimed this was a “once in a 100 year storm” and that it was unlikely to happen again.

During the storm water burst up out of the drain in the car park near our dojo, and combined with the run off from the street the car park very quickly went under about 25 centimetres of muddy water. It poured into all the other units surrounding the car park including our dojo which was flooded to a depth of 15 centimetres. The newer mats that were better sealed floated, but the majority of the mats which were older and had split or become damaged through years of wear and tear, were completely waterlogged and submerged.

There was nothing anyone could do until the water subsided. Though this didn't take long once the rain had stopped, we still had a huge mess to clean up. The oldest most waterlogged mats were almost too heavy to lift and started to fall apart as soon as we tried. We dragged them outside and stacked the worst of them in a nearby bin. The rest we laid out in the sun to dry.

Fortunately it was December and the weather was hot. The least damaged mats we spread out in the dojo once we had cleaned the floor and within a couple of days they were dry enough to put back down. The other older mats we had brought inside and had them stacked up on racks or leaning against the walls so the water would drain out of them. Once the water had drained out they soon dried out.

The better mats drying out.



We reported the damage to the Insurance Company and put in a claim for storm damage. An assessor came around to have a look. It didn't take long to convince him that training on mats that were water damaged was dangerous in the longer term because of repetitive strain injury. The water had loosened the binding of the compressed rubber and foam and the mats no longer were able to absorb impact. This meant hard falls were exactly that. Hard, because you hit the concrete underneath with the mats not absorbing any impact.

Quotes were obtained. The Insurance Company accepted one of them and sent us a cheque immediately. We ordered the mats and knew we had to wait about 12 weeks because the mats were being made and shipped from Germany. They were Olympic standard Judo mats and there were 90 of them. In the meantime we continued to train and the mouldy smell soon disappeared. The mats got lumpier and rapidly started deteriorating. The rubber and foam had turned into something like sand and if you moved one of them it just poured out in a heap. We were told the Insurance Company would take the mats away for salvage once the new ones arrived, but really, they weren't worth salvaging.

As luck would have it, the mats sent to us from Germany were the wrong thickness, only 15mm instead of the standard 40mm, and they had to be re-ordered; because had they sent us the right thickness and had we put them down we would have been in real trouble.

We had another unbelievable rainstorm and that combined with a king tide produced even worse flooding than did the previous "one in a hundred year storm". The Weather Bureau dubbed this the "one in a thousand year storm." It didn't help us whatever they called it. The dojo was under water again.

This time it was winter (July) and there was no way we could dry the mats. Half of them – the ones too far gone to be of any use – were dumped. The other half we tried to dry out so we would have something to practice on. Every time you fell on them water squirted out through tiny splits and holes. And these were the good ones! They squished when you knelt down, and if you lifted one to look underneath, the concrete was slimy and wet from water seeping out of the mat. The smell was bad, and who knows what bacteria were breeding in the slime. People kept asking when the new mats would arrive, but we couldn't answer them. We just had to wait. A lot stopped coming which was understandable.

About two weeks after this second flood, the mats arrived. Two pallets with 45 mats stacked up on each one. Fantastic! Now we could finally get the place cleaned up and have something decent to train on. We closed everything for a week. The dojo was hosed out, and the floor allowed to dry. The smell quickly disappeared and half the mats were put down initially.

The thought then occurred to the committee that in all



Above: Half way there, ready to begin laying the floor surface. The mats we tried to salvage are stacked and drying above the dressing rooms, the new ones are stacked beside the entrance.

Below: There's more to being an Area Representative than just teaching. Graham Morris Sensei replastering and repairing the Kamiza.



likelihood we could get another disastrous flood, and the same thing could easily happen again. The only solution seemed to be that we raise the floor to a height sufficient to avoid any future flooding. Even if the concrete floor got wet the mats if raised high enough would be okay. This option was costed, and the money borrowed (very kindly from Aiki-Kai Australia) so we could go ahead and build a raised floor.

The old mats, now twice inundated were dumped at the tip. They were beyond salvaging, and the Insurance Company even paid for the bin to take them away.

The floor was sealed to make it easier to clean if ever it was flooded again, and the raised floor constructed over a working weekend. Part of the roof was insulated, and the Kamiza was reconstructed. We decided a big new portrait of O'Sensei would look better than the tiny photograph we had been using so this was organised. The portrait is mounted on canvas and looks absolutely fabulous. It really lifts the dojo.

It was also suggested it would look nice if we had portraits of the two Doshu, the late Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba, which we could put on one of the side walls overlooking the dojo. Unfortunately we only had small images such as those on the Hombu website and these were

just too low a resolution to blow up to any size.

Frank Firley, who trains on Sunday mornings, is a prize winning painter of portraits and he said he would be happy to paint portraits if we could supply him with photos to work from. We offered to pay him but he insisted that this would be his contribution to the refurbishment of the dojo accepting only what it cost him for materials to produce the two portraits.

Frank works with oils, watercolour, and pen and ink. His main passion however is portraits painted with oils, and as can be seen in the photo on the next page he does a fantastic job. He has been painting for over 30 years and his work is represented in collections in Australia, Europe and America. Among the many awards he has won is the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, Best painting Tasmanian Art Exhibition 2 years in a row, Coffs Harbour Best Painting Exhibit, and many others.

He can be contacted through Queensland Aiki-Kai, or by phoning 07 55 74 5317.

The committee of Queensland Aiki-Kai would like to thank all those who helped and contributed in many ways to refurbishing the dojo. It has given all of us a better and safer place to practice in.

'Gambatte!'

Report and photos by J Litchen. Additional photos by Michael Gauci.

Winter Training in Tasmania by John Karas

The township of Deloraine is located between the two northern cities of Launceston and Devonport, both of which have their own dojo's. The Deloraine dojo is a modest sized venue sitting between a tattoo studio and a second hand shop on the main street. Although small, the dojo is the main training venue for those in the north of the state wishing to train with Tony Smibert Sensei, and it has a reputation for being very cold in the winter months. Snow has been known to fall in Deloraine on the odd occasion during a very cold snap, but it is certainly not a common occurrence. The central plateau and its lakes on the other hand a short distance away are often covered in snow and ice during winter, providing its own unique opportunities for outdoor training. Whenever possible during winter Smibert sensei likes to take at least one class on the plateau at a scenic little spot called Little Pine Lake. The training usually takes place on a Saturday morning instead of normal indoor training, the day itself depending on the road conditions, and the day and date are therefore usually circumstantial.

Mid winter last year saw about a dozen students and sensei head for the hills. The day itself was clear and brisk with no wind chill factor, ideal training conditions. We walked along the path past pencil pines many hundreds of years old and snow covered rocks with myriad colours and lichen to a constructed viewing platform at the lakes edge. For the first time that I can remember the lake itself was frozen, we all line up facing the lake and cliff faces at sensei's instruction, Gi tops are taken off and Funakogi and Furutama is undertaken. When performed in the dojo the sound resonates and can be heard in the street outside, here it is barely noticeable. Our arms bristle with dew and our energy increases, as we start to practice irimi and tenkan entries and then stretching exercises. We practice irimi nage, ikkyo, nikkyo, arm locks, head locks, and basic bokken techniques, the air is cold but inside we are



John Karas Sensei intensely focussed during Sugano Shihan's bokken class.



Frank Firley with his two portraits.
Photo by Michael gauci.

warm , we smile, we are awake, we are alive and training in the most awe inspiring environment. We feel privileged to be able to train here and be part of this special moment. We share this moment together and walk slowly back to the vehicles where a spontaneous snowball fight occurs , we wouldn't be dead for quids.

John Karas Sensei, 5th Dan, is the Area Representative for Tasmania.
Training in the snow and icicles photos by John Karas Sensei.



Some of the Pencil Pines in the forest behind the bridge where the group is standing are over 1000 years old.



Aiki-Kai Australia to Sponsor two Children

With Sugano Sensei's encouragement Aiki-Kai Australia has taken on the responsibility of sponsoring two children in two third-world countries; Ramatou Hassane Kirgni, a girl born in 2001 in Niger, and Rakib a boy born in 2000 in Bangladesh.

Information and updates relating to both these children will appear on Aiki-Kai Australia's website but for those without access to the website here is a brief rundown regarding both children.



Rakib is a cheerful boy whose favourite pastimes include singing and watching TV. He tells his mother that when he grows up he would like to be an office worker. Being part of a poor family in Bangladesh as soon as he is able he helps with the chores around the house such as fetching water and running small errands. He is too young to attend school so spends most of his time at home where other family members, friends and neighbours help look after him while his parents are working.

Rakib and his family live in a small state owned house made of bamboo with a corrugated metal roof. The house is in fair condition but the family do not have their own latrine and must share facilities with neighbours and relatives. Unfortunately this creates a lower level of hygiene and increases the incidence of disease, especially amongst children.

Rakib's family is lucky enough to get their water from a bore with a hand pump in their back yard. This water is safe, although in general in the area safe water is hard to find and many waterborne diseases like cholera and diarrhoea are endemic.

Rakib's family uses an open fire to cook their meals and the main fuel is wood, which they obtain from a local store. For lighting they do have electricity which also supplies the power source for the community TV which they love to watch during the evenings.

Rakib is currently participating in a growth monitoring program which will help to highlight a possible lack of nutrition which needs to be overcome to ensure healthy development. The language he speaks is Bangla.

Ramatou is a friendly little girl whose favourite games include playing with dolls, getting together with friends and dancing. Children in her community normally assist their families with the daily chores needed to survive. Ramatou is still too young to do this but it will be expected of her as she gets older. She does not yet attend school but spends her time playing with other neighbourhood children and is looked after by older siblings or neighbours.

Ramatou unfortunately suffered from a severe bout of diarrhoea over the past six months but with help from the local Health centre she has recovered. She is also participating in a growth monitoring program to discover what nutrition she lacks, so that it can be overcome to ensure a healthier life. She has received some vaccinations against the most common childhood diseases.

Ramatou lives with her family in a small house made from adobe with a canvas tent roof which is owned in partnership with relatives. They do not have their own latrine and have to use an open field or a public area for their needs. This is not a very healthy situation for children.

Throughout the year Ramatou and her family obtain their drinking water from a bore with a hand pump located about 1 kilometre away. Their daily meals are cooked on an open fire for which they have to gather wood which is the work for women and children and is very time consuming. They use a kerosene lamp for lighting at night. Their community life consists of sitting together to tell stories and listening to music and news on the radio.

The Bodhi McSweeney Column



Bodhi training at Summer School with Tony Smibert Sensei.

The feedback I received at summer school was very positive with people liking the content and focus of this column. Thanks to those who have responded. Kim Tomlinson from Western Australia has been inspired to offer her thoughts., and I am looking forward to receiving articles from people who have offered to write one. I welcome thoughts and responses from all.

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A Woman's Perspective by Kim Tomlinson

I also have an insight I would like to share on the issue of women in Aikido.

Three or four years ago, John Litchen invited myself and other female aikidoka to comment in this newsletter on the question of why more women don't practice Aikido? At that time I didn't really have any answers. Now as a mother of a toddler and a baby it has become glaringly obvious, in a word, child care.

Most Aikido classes happen between the hours of 5 and 9pm. As any parent knows this coincides with the bath, dinner, bed routine and the most high needs time of the kids. Even if there is a partner available and willing to take this on by himself at least twice a week, many women will simply choose not to do this because of the pressure it can put on the whole family. For whatever reasons, my experience is that it does seem to be easier for the male rather than the female parent to take this time out in the evenings.

But I'm a female parent so why can I do it?

Because I started my Aikido training in my early twenties and thus had 12 years of being able to learn the benefits and become completely committed to Aikido before having children. So now I wouldn't give up Aikido for these reasons. (Having a supportive partner is necessary!). That the family responsibility issue may be a real barrier to women starting Aikido, was reinforced for me by an experience I had a couple of years ago when our local health club started up a crèche. I was so excited. I had wanted to improve my fitness for an upcoming summer school and now I could do it during the convenient hours of 9am and noon, child free. Actually what I had really wanted to do was continue the Yoga class I had attended in pregnancy, but I gave it up because, like Aikido, Yoga class starts at 6pm and there's no crèche.

The day I attended the health club exercise class the crèche was packed and so was the class; about 30 women between the ages of 20 and 50. Well I got a reasonable workout (it felt like work whereas Aikido feels like fun) but the class was soul-less and boring. I never went back and I wondered how many of the women in that class would choose Aikido instead if they had the option?

So how we can make the gift of Aikido a more accessible option for women? Changing the time of classes is usually not practical since daytime training would exclude most working men and women. Also sports centers don't tend to operate crèches' outside working hours. However one simple answer may be to encourage younger women to train and discover the joys of Aikido before they are restricted by family obligations, perhaps then they may choose to continue on. It worked for me.

Kim Tomlinson is a Ni Dan and is the Instructor at Albany Aikido,
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Ph 08 9842 6881

Training with Attention by Kim Tomlinson.



I enjoyed reading Bodhi McSweeney's article, 'The Change Room', in the last edition of this newsletter. Interestingly I have often experienced similar feelings in relation to my Aikido training, but occurring the other way around to those discussed in the article. That is I have had the experience of feeling overwhelmed, and emotionally fragile or sensitive before going to class — for example if I've had a difficult day and a bad night's sleep, up with the kids. However I trot along to Aikido class anyway; since I'm the instructor I don't like to cancel unless I'm physically sick.

I start the class and simply progress as usual. My energy builds as my body warms up and mental constructs of, 'I can't do it, it's all too hard', drop away replaced by greater self confidence and the joy of movement, shared with the other aikidoka. Inevitably I finish the class feeling optimistic, renewed, satisfied, and grateful. On more than one occasion my husband has commented on the positive 'difference' in me when I arrive home.

I believe this kind of transformation is the healing gift of O'Sensei's genius. No need to talk too much during the class; talking too often interferes with the flow and draws me back to the limitations of the mind. No need to 'try' harder, or judge my performance too harshly, just simply train with all my attention thereby creating the 'space' for the other aikidoka to do the same. This in turn allows the practice of Aikido to work its magic on everyone.

40 years
of
teaching



Aikido
in
Australia



Congratulations to Seiichi Sugano Shihan

