

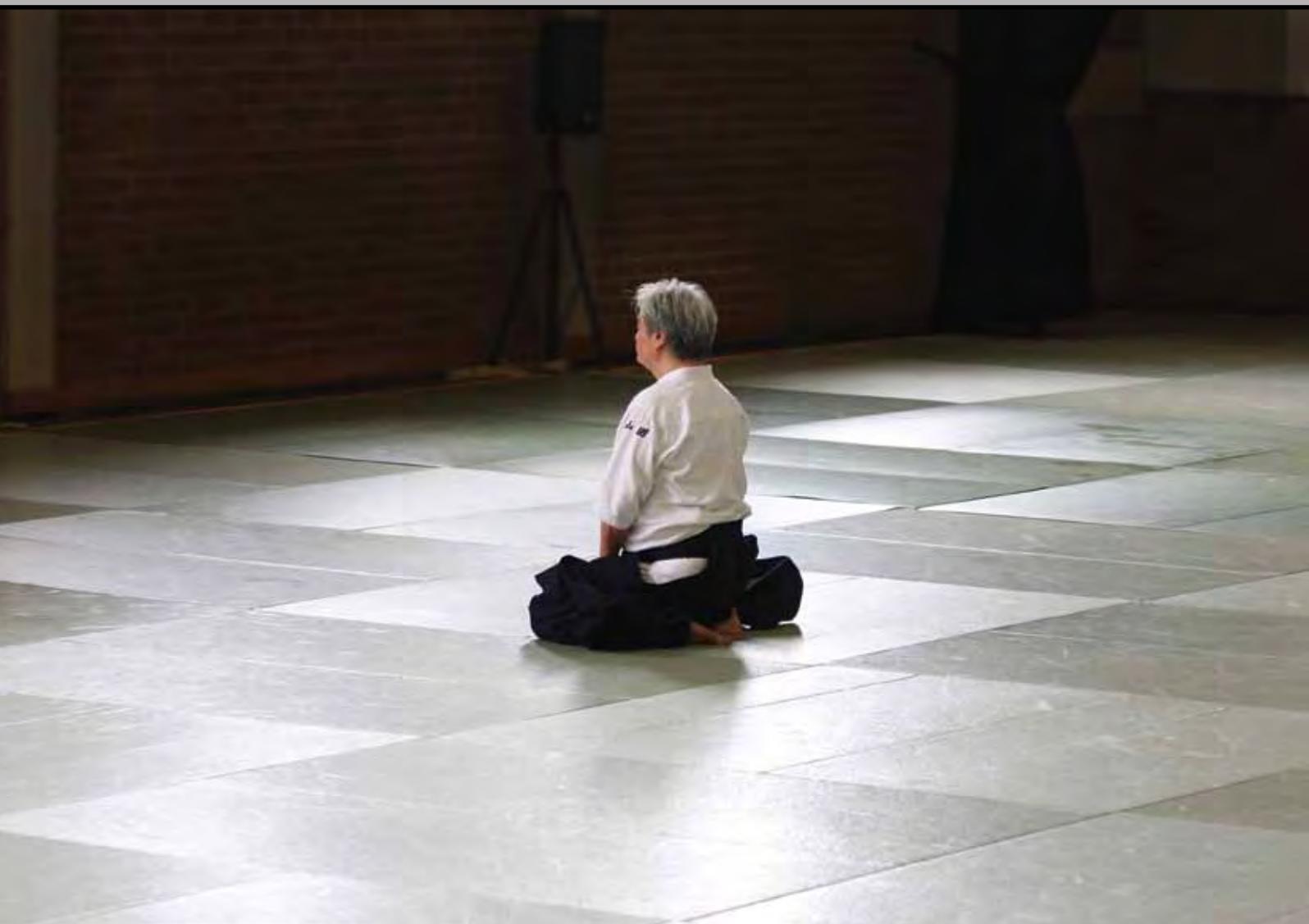
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Aikido in Australia

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 2

Celebration of a Life and Legacy
Sugano Shihan's Commemorative
School, Melbourne, January, 2011



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QLD: Graham Morris. **SA:** David Scott. **TAS:** Tony Smibert.

VIC: Robert Botterill, David Brown, Felica Birman, Ray Oldman, Geoffrey Savage, John Rockstrom, John Watson. **WA:** Hugh Derham.

Aikido in Australia — is the official journal of Aiki Kai (Australia):
National Aikido Association Inc. ABN 18 611 543 976.

Website: <http://www.aikido.org.au/>

Print Post Publication number: PP424022/00903.

Address for official documents: GPO Box 2783. Melbourne, Victoria, 3001.

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NEW EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Aiki Kai Australia has had an equal opportunity policy drawn up. The policy contains procedures to be followed should, for example, any person feel that they have been victimised or sexually harassed. This policy is posted on the website. Should anyone experience or have a matter of concern, they should contact Andrew Dziedzic to find out the appropriate officer to speak to. All enquiries will be handled with the strictest confidence and should discussion be needed Andrew will phone back at Aiki Kai Australia's expense.

Summer School 2011 was the second National School to be held without Sugano Shihan present.

Sensei was still with us for Winter School last July (2010) although gravely ill at that time. He spoke to Tony Smibert Shihan, listened to, and I'm sure felt, our enthusiasm via Tony Sensei's mobile.

This time however Sugano Sensei had passed on and can no longer be with us physically. But his spirit is certainly with us as everyone who attended his most recent Summer School will attest.

With Guests from all over the world who had, and still have, a strong connection with Sensei, the school could be nothing other than a success.

The two main articles in this issue by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei and John Watson Sensei provide a wonderful idea of how enthusiastic attendees were and how much those who couldn't attend missed because of their absence.

The photos by Tony Naughton and Valeriu Campan also demonstrate the enthusiasm, concentration and the overall good time had by all.

Thanks to Tony and Valeriu as well as to those who contributed articles. for making this a special issue.

John Litchen - Editor.

Smibert Shihan welcoming special guests, visitors and students to Australia and to Sugano Shihan's National commemorative Summer School for 2011.



Summer School 2011 report by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei National Area Representative



We could not have wished for a better gesture of thanks to Sensei.

After Sugano Sensei's passing last year, what perhaps took us all a bit by surprise was the energy and commitment which emerged at the 2011 Commemorative Summer School, as instructors and students alike all gave of their energetic best in a celebration of Sugano Sensei's life. As Yamada Shihan said when he came onto the mat, we all knew why we were at the School. Everyone truly rose to this occasion.

And what an incredible thing it was to find we had a close Aikido family all over the globe - family you barely knew existed in some cases - linked through our joint heritage of Sugano Sensei's teaching. Of course we were also having happy reunions with members of this extended family already well known to us, but in all cases we managed to get to know everyone a little better.

Many of the overseas instructors at this school, from New York and elsewhere were here as guests of the Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation. For many of those invited from New York, this was a small token of thanks for the huge dedication and care devoted to Sugano Sensei in New York, leading up to and including his final period of hospitalisation. Many people there took on the role of assisting Sensei for extended periods, unasked and of course unpaid, but with unending dedication. Bringing a few of these people to Australia was one way of acknowledging that, in a sense, they did what we would have wished for Sensei ourselves had we been there all along.

Of course first and foremost, Yamada Shihan as Sugano Shihan's friend and *sempai* (and Founder of the USAF), had provided Sugano Sensei with much support and assistance though-out Sensei's adult life, not only in New York. As usual with Yamada Shihan's classes, at this school we were again treated to a display of just what makes this special but now much smaller group of the former uchi deshi of O Sensei so special - especially with Yamada Shihan able to use as uke four of the former uchi deshi from his own dojo, including our own Tristan and Luke Derham.

There were many others who came who had helped Sugano Sensei selflessly over his years of illness. Mike Abrams Shihan from New York, among Yamada Shihan's longest standing students, had also faithfully assisted Sugano Sensei in New York and so attended as our guest; he taught in his particularly unique fashion, with an eye for the unusual and enjoyable. The other students able to come from New York on this occasion were Chuck Mensch, Sharon Dominguez and Ai Shapiro, all of whom had rendered special service to Sugano Sensei. We are hoping that others from New York will be able to come for Winter School, and a number of them as guests.

With Takase Shihan coming from New Zealand as a good neighbour to express his trans-Tasman respects to the memory of Sugano Shihan, we had a class in which the focus was on not just a new perspective on technique but also a reminder that we need to enjoy our training, and to train with joy.

In a similar vein, Phillip Lee Sensei attended the School with

several of his students, having hosted several seminars by Sugano Shihan in his dojos in Singapore. Everyone seemed to very much enjoy Lee Sensei's class, with techniques as energetic as they were interesting. From nearby Malaysia, we were also happy to have the senior members of the Malaysian Aikido Association, attend the school, including "Doc" Leong and Tony Lau, as well as of course George Lo from Sydney, who is now a senior member of the Malaysian Teaching Committee and who had regularly been returning to Malaysia to teach. For those who are not aware of this, Sugano Sensei was the Technical Director of MAA.

Of course Sugano Sensei himself had introduced us to Louis Van Thieghem Sensei, who recently attended the 2009 Sydney Winter School, and again taught at this school, where we once more we saw so much that was familiar and flowing directly from Sugano Sensei's teachings. Also from Belgium, Azziz Belhassane Sensei taught a class which put a smile on all our faces as he urged us to do so, letting us see how this simple step could transform our attitude to training, a class that everyone obviously enjoyed. Alain Dujardin, President of the Flemish Aikido Federation of North Belgium (VAV), also attended the school as a trainee and Tony Smibert Shihan has accepted an invitation to teach at a VAV seminar in Belgium this year.

From Holland Carel Zappeij Sensei and his wife Lily Zappeij were among the invited guests, as they had been the key personnel in arranging seminars for Sensei there. Many of those who have attended the several national schools they have come to in the past will remember their friendly faces with fond memories. Carel Zappeij Sensei's classes have always been a hit so many sought out his class at the Summer School, and were not disappointed.

From California Gentil Pennewaert Sensei conducted a precise class fully reflecting his study with Sugano Sensei. The bokken DVD's that Pennewaert Sensei made with Sugano Sensei are a valuable resource available through his web-site.

Of course, real highlights - and one especially anticipated by the Australian students - were the classes of Tony Smibert Shihan and of Robert Botterill and Hanan Janiv Shihans. Not surprisingly, all eyes were on them at this turning point.

The high energy was there from the beginning of Smibert Shihan's first class on the first day - perhaps setting the tone and the lead for the rest of the school. After our mighty shout at the conclusion of *chinkon kishin* that seemed to echo so strongly as to be heard in another dimension, we all launched into the training with the energy which Sensei would have wished us to show. Shihan's Robert Botterill and Hanan Janiv's classes followed and perhaps we were struck again by the rich diversity of Sensei's heritage and the mature development of many different aspects of his teachings which were indeed demonstrated in both their classes.

We were of course also proud to put on display the teaching



Yamada Shihan, Uke Phillip Lee above: Right, Uke Luke Drham



Summer Scool 2011
Photography by Tony Naughton



Above and below Takase Shihan. Above right Phillip Lee Sensei Below right Julie Boydell



Yamada Shihan teaching...

by a selection of our other Australian senior teachers. There were the as-ever so intriguing classes by David Brown Sensei, as well as classes by Sensei's Richard Barnes, Roger Savage, John Rockstrom, David Scott and Felicia Birman, well familiar to Australian National School attendees. Each provided another wonderful insight into how long-term students of Sensei have developed into teachers whose art reflects a great deal of their own long-term Aikido maturity.

In addition, we were honoured to have several other senior teachers attend from various countries, for whom there was no room to squeeze in extra classes in a tight schedule. A good example was Andrew Williamson Sensei from New Zealand. In various places where Sugano Sensei taught, various organisations have now turned to Sugano Shihan's Foundation for fellowship, assistance, guidance and advice in relation to following Sugano Sensei's heritage. In the cases of Malaysia and Belgium, invitations have been accepted for Tony Smibert Shihan to teach on behalf of the Foundation during the coming year. Tony Smibert Shihan also recently travelled to Japan to consult with Doshu about doing so with Hombu's support. Already the other Australian Shihans have been invited to teach on behalf of the Foundation overseas.

At the commemorative dinner, while we reflected on our sense of loss, the event was more about our sense of gratitude to Sugano Shihan. Yamada Shihan spoke simply but with great dignity of our sense of shared loss. Tony Smibert was moved as he spoke about Sugano Sensei, about the care that he was given in his last months, and how Sensei had prepared for the future of Aikido in Australia within his Foundation. What encapsulated the mood of the evening was the long and heart-felt round of applause Tony led us in to celebrate the life of our teacher.

Jikou Sugano thanked all who had cared for his father, on behalf of himself and his sister Michelle, and indeed his whole family. Then symbolically a 14 year old Melbourne student, Morgan Johnson, spoke eloquently on behalf of all future students, reflecting on his own his commitment to the legacy of Sugano Sensei's teaching. We were also honoured to hear the wonderfully haunting shakuhachi performance of David Brown Sensei whose playing I felt echoed our profound sense of loss. This was followed later by the renowned Australian guitarist (and Melbourne Aikidoka) Jochen Schubert, who treated us to a selection of reflective and sensitively rendered pieces.

Below, enjoying a precious moment....



However the surprise announcement by Yamada Shihan of the promotion of Robert Botterill and Hanan Janiv to the rank of 7th Dan, as announced a few days before during Kagami Biraki at Hombu Dojo in Japan, was a truly wonderful fulfilment of the wishes of Sugano Shihan at a most auspicious moment - the beginning of his Foundation's new journey. This was coupled with the announcement that Yamada Shihan had graciously agreed to become the Honorary Patron of Aiki Kai Australia, a title role which reflects the esteem in which we hold his advice and which honours us greatly.

This School was one for making connections. We in Aiki Kai Australia of course connected or re-connected with people from all over the world, both instructors and students, many of whom had come from across the world, to honour the memory of Sugano Sensei. The Foundation also connected with many of the Sugano Sensei's most senior students, now teaching all over the world - with much optimism as to the mutual benefit that could flow from our sharing in Sensei's Aikido heritage. We in Australia also made a new connection with each other - it was if we all suddenly realised that the heritage which Sensei gave to us is now held by all of us, but we realised the lead will come from the senior students whose development Sensei shaped and closely directed over so many years. It seems that they too now looked at each other anew, with hope and respect for the shared task ahead. It was as if those who taught at the school suddenly connected with that part of their Aikido core that had been developed by Sugano Sensei beneath the surface, and this clearly came out in their inspired teaching. This energy in turn communicated itself to all of us, new and old, who responded with joyful and meaningful training.

If this school reflected what is coming in the future, then we have every reason to be full of optimism. And I believe Sugano Sensei would have been well pleased.

Now we have one further event to complete the cycle of farewell and renewal: the Winter School in Sydney which will include the holding of a special commemorative kotodama training at Mt Banks on Thursday 7 July, the site of annual Winter Training for so many years.

Yamada Shihan with Tony Smibert Shihan



Women in Aikido Dinner

by Anne Travers and Linda Godfrey

The second Australian Women in Aikido Dinner was held as part of the social events surrounding the Commemorative Summer School. With many women aikidoka attending, from not only all over Australia but internationally as well, it was a wonderful opportunity to get together. The food was delicious and the company was great.

The three key speakers told fascinating stories of their recollections of aikido over the years and many fond memories of Shihan Sugano:

- Felicia Birman sensei, 6th dan from Victoria, told us how she started training at Monash University in 1974 under Sensei Sugano. Although at the time she had no idea of his significance to come as a martial artist and mentor. However, she was struck by what a beautiful martial art aikido is. She told many stories about the early days of aikido in Australia.
- Marie Petery sensei, 6th dan from the Northern Territory, started training in NT in 1975. Sensei Sugano would make regular trips to NT and often stayed with Marie and her family. She told us about how Sensei would accommodate people's needs for where they were in their lives. She explained her proudest aikido moment was representing Australia in Japan at Sensei's request at the IAF congress demonstration 2 years ago.
- Sharon Dominguez sensei, 5th dan from New York USA, started training in 1984 under Nakazono Sensei. When she moved to New York she started training at New York Aiki Kai and met Sensei Sugano. She became otomo to both Yamada Shihan and Sugano Shihan and told us amusing stories about transporting Sugano Shihan and young children in her car to aikido events. Sharon believes that aikido training helps us to transform ourselves.

Women attending the dinner were:

Victoria: Felicia Birman sensei, Linda Godfrey sensei, Beverly Webster, Julie Boydell, Anne Travers, Kate Stankovich, Tammy Kohn, Adrienne Cleaver, Holly De Jong, Janene Godden

ACT: Ruth Treyde sensei, Katherine Henderson, Margaret Dinan sensei,

NSW: Machiko Hirata sensei, Charmaine Grace, Beth Gibbings, Michele Balharry, Monica Sala,

WA: Vivienne Etter sensei, Kim Tomlinson

TAS: Annalise Bennett, Kaye Jenkins sensei, Gaye Webb, Marion Artis

NT: Marie Petery sensei,

Singapore: Magali Nicholas, Fiona Lawtie

USA: Sharon Dominguez sensei



Sharon Dominguez

photographs this page from Linda Godfrey

CHILDREN IN AIKIDO

By Rodrigo Castellanos (San Dan)

"In the end, one could not help being impressed by the sincerity and earnestness shown in practice by young people. (...) And when teaching children never think that they are incapable of grasping the fundamentals of Aikido. Children, too, should be regarded as individuals who seek to grow on the path of love and harmony as does each of us regardless of age."
Kisshomaru Ueshiba: The Spirit of Aikido

In his book, *The Spirit of Aikido* (Kodansha, 1984), the second Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, describes his initial reactions about having children Aikido classes at Hombu Dojo. He acknowledges his initial doubts about introducing children to Aikido because "sooner or later they will have to understand the philosophy behind Aikido" and "the games that may keep their attention are kept to a minimum".

It was with similar doubts but equally strong resolve as Doshu's to test the validity of those doubts that Victoria began children classes almost 5 years ago.

During this time, at the Warrandyte Dojo, we have received various profiles of kids. These range from Aspersers' kids to kids with particular shyness or difficulty in relating to other kids. Even kids that seem to have an "out there" personality and being "quite active" have benefited enormously from the practice of Aikido. One of my first Aikido teachers used to say that Aikido helps us to discover the hidden parts of ourselves that are not usually accessible in other environments. Therefore, shy kids will find strength and resolve and excessively active kids will find calmness and stillness. He even used to joke that people who are underweight will put on weight and those overweight will lose weight with the practice of Aikido!

As it is with adults, Aikido provides kids with a psychosomatic tool to understand how their bodies work within their own space as well as with the interaction of another body that is creating some type of pressure or energy. As we know, in Aikido this takes a very specific physical form however, through practice we begin to relate to these interactions in non-physical forms (i.e. verbal, psychological and socio-environmental behaviour).

In the beginning invariably all kids go through a similar process of discovering their posture and the possibilities that a centred body provides them with as opposed to a contracted-"fist clenched" attitude that narrows and weakens their options of reacting, moving and interacting with themselves and others.

It is interesting also to notice the first effects that long hours of sitting and learning to write (particularly in kids as young as 6 years of age) have in their bodies. Shoulders up and tight, stiff necks and clenched fists are common occurrences. These kinds of physical constraints are even more pronounced in specific moments of the training like for example while sitting in seiza or doing breathing exercises.

It is not uncommon, unfortunately, to see kids at a very young age that have already lost their flexibility in their knees, ankles and thighs. In the beginning, I thought that inflexibility and tension in the body was relatively normal for adults given our current lifestyles but I was surprised to see it happening also in very young children.

Possibly some of the most rewarding experiences while sharing Aikido with children are for example when a very contracted child begins a training session and is even incapable of opening his/her fists while performing tai no henko but by the end of the class his/her hand feels open, warm and with a vitality that was not there one hour before. This psychosomatic shift provides

the child with an important foundation to take back again into the world after being exposed to an environment that, without competition or threat, demands her to expand her awareness field to a point where her energy and vitality are increased and manifested as a release of tension in her body. At the same time, by witnessing these kinds of transformations, the Aikido instructor understands better the effects that training brings to a student that in this case remains open and with, literally, a "student/beginners" mind and is an invitation to emulate this behaviour.

Also, by teaching children, the instructors are continually challenged to "refine" their techniques (and sharing methods) since these must remain "effective" but within the absolute mandate of being safe. Concepts like blending with high-speed movements (which often are performed by kids because of their excitement) and unbalancing our partners must still be present while the application of the related techniques must remain 100% safe and controlled. This is the ideal way of practicing with anybody, adults or children!

As Tony Smibert Shihan said in an earlier article, "Aikido understanding comes from the evolution of new pathways of thinking that evolve naturally in the brain as a result of a training system based on learning through bodily experience". I believe that it is an important opportunity for children to allow them to begin this learning process through bodily experience and provide society with an additional tool to cultivate human beings. Definitely is hard to say, how much a child actually benefits from the practise of Aikido in the short term or how early a kid should begin Aikido practice (I myself am not sure if I want my 5 year old daughter to begin on the path of Aikido so early), however as with other opportunities in life it is rewarding to think that at least this opportunity exists for whoever is ready to take it.

Thanks to the support of Aikido Victoria, the children's classes started at the Heidelberg and Warrandyte Dojo in 2004 and since 2009 at Clifton Hill Dojo.

Last year, Aikido Victoria conducted two well-attended Children's Special Days of training and Gradings (around 30 children attended these sessions). As with adults, the format of such days has been 2 classes (of one hour each) followed by a Grading session. This year we have also had several meetings with children's instructors to share and collaborate on the challenges and the joys of teaching children. Through these meetings we have been able to rapidly implement the SAFE (Safe and Fun Exercise) program and adopt a consistent approach across all Dojos.

Today, Aikido Victoria is very lucky in having more than half a dozen instructors (including Geoff Savage Sensei, Rokudan) running children sessions at Heidelberg, Warrandyte, Clifton Hill (and soon Glen Waverly) Dojos. It is my expectation that the combination of this availability of instructors with the newly created SAFE program at a National Level will certainly increase the interest of students in this important segment of our society.



Summer School 2011

report by John Watson Sensei

Photography by Tony Naughton

The 2011 Summer School was a special event to celebrate the life and achievements of Sugano Shihan. With many international instructors and guests plus a large local contingent it was indeed a special and memorable week of training.

Melbourne's weather also gave us something unforgettable as well! With temperatures forecast to be in the mid 20's for the week, it appeared that we would avoid some of the usual 35 to 40 degrees days expected at this time of the year. While it turned out that the daily temperatures were not very high, the humidity was almost unprecedented for Melbourne. In fact it was so humid in the hall that once after the morning training session, I noticed that the windows of the training hall were completely fogged up from the inside!

There was a busy training schedule with 5 classes a day and the mat was very crowded with the large number of attendees. In keeping with the occasion, everyone trained with focus and as much energy as the conditions and crowded mat would allow. Of course everyone has their own special memories of the event, so I'll mention just a few of the things that stood out for me.

While we have been lucky enough to have visits from Yamada Shihan a number of times before, this was the first time I noticed the important part that 'horizontal' movement played in many of his techniques. He seemed to achieve great power in many of the techniques he demonstrated, by first lowering his hips and then rotating his whole body. This caused his uke's to move a large distance horizontally. Of course Yamada Shihan uses both vertical and horizontal movement in his techniques, but this aspect of Yamada Shihan's movement really stood out for me this time.

Takase Shihan taught his classes as he has done on previous visits to Australia - with an unassuming attitude and a liberal dash of humour. At the start of his first class he said he was going to offer us some thoughts and ideas about Aikido that we may wish to consider in addition to everything that we had learned from Sugano Shihan. There was something in the way he said this that made me think about the process of maturing in terms of Aikido and that there was ultimately some choice in how we, as individuals passed on what we had learned through Aikido.

With all the instructors being so senior, there was the opportunity to see and to learn many new techniques. As part of his class, Phillip Lee Sensei did some very interesting variations of Yokomen uchi irimi nage - five in total, as well as some tachi dori techniques that I hadn't seen before. There was also the chance to see the same technique or principle taught by different instructors, and this happened with Riyote tori tenchi nage. Yamada Shihan taught this technique in some detail, initially by looking at the movement of the upper hand without the lower hand being gripped. Later in the week, Mike Abrams Shihan also taught a variation of Riyote tori tenchi nage focussing on the lower hand and hip movement. This was just one of the many variations on familiar techniques that Abrams Shihan taught. He had a wonderful sense of humour both on and off the mat and I'm sure he would have enjoyed the observation that if Woody Allen had done Aikido he might have ended up like Abrams Shihan. Riyote tori tenchi nage was the basis for the whole class taught by David Brown Sensei, which looked at many of the



Top, Mike Abrahams Shihan

Middle, Takase Shihan demonstrating

Bottom, Yamada Shihan speaking with Carel Zappeij and David Bell



do's and don'ts of this technique. He showed some of the consequences of poor hand / arm position, bad posture and wrong distance. As well, he taught some techniques that can follow on from the basic tenchi nage position if uke makes a second attack in the middle of the technique. Analysing one technique in such depth is something of a contrast to the usual format of a class.

In his class, Richard Barnes Sensei told us a wonderful anecdote about analysing something in depth as well. He said that when he was teaching children he used to give them an exercise as homework, where they would have to look at something, for example a pencil, and list ten different things about it. The next day they would come back and mention things about the shape of the pencil, its colour and length and so on. He would then tell the children when they went home that night that they had to do the same thing and list another ten things about the pencil. They would come back the next day and list some more things such as how sharp the pencil was, what brand it was, where it had some defects etc. Yet again for homework the next night he would ask them to list another ten things about the pencil, and so on. He was drawing a parallel with this anecdote, to what is a very important aspect of training in Aikido.

Sugano Shihan devoted his life to the study of Aikido and to passing on what he had learned to those that followed him. Through this process of continuously evolving his understanding of Aikido, he provided a model for everyone to follow and indeed in recent years he had been emphasising the need for us to 'study' Aikido as well. Because of Sensei's continual development, students following him were always challenged to learn something new, even those who had been following him for 30 or 40 years or more. This challenge involved both the in depth study of something in particular, as well as the opportunity to study the breadth that Aikido has to offer. Sensei often said that Aikido has 'so many different aspects'. Instructors at the Summer School drew on the many different aspects of Aikido that they had learned from Sensei over the years. An aspect that some students may not have had much exposure to, was kotodama training (koto means 'word, language or spirit' and tama or dama means 'spirit or soul', so that kotodama could be translated as 'language of the spirit' or 'word spirit'). David Scott Sensei used kotodama at the beginning of his class and created a wonderful experiential moment with the whole class chanting the syllable 'su'. Being near the end of the day, when everyone was tired, this exercise provided a moment of tranquillity. Initially we were all chanting the 'su' together and the volume rose and fell, because we were all following the timing of Scott Sensei. Over time as the rhythm of our own breathing took over, the sound in the hall became more of a continuous even 'su', as everybody was starting and finishing their chant at different times. Then without any signal, Scott Sensei stopped chanting and just sat there. Soon everyone followed and just sat there as well, but somehow the feeling / sound of 'su' continued to resonate inside me and continued until Scott Sensei eventually moved to the next exercise. The remainder of his class involved the step by step development of a very interesting bokken to bokken partner exercise.

Weapons of course, were a major aspect of Aikido that Sugano Shihan included in his teaching. Roger Savage Sensei used the jo in his class, and began with the 7 movement pattern. Having five classes



Above, stretching, ushiro riotedori
Carel Zappeij Sensei with Dacid Bell,
below, Phillip Lee Sensei.





each day meant that each class was only about an hour long, so that at the end of classes we were left wishing that they could have gone on for just a little more time. This was certainly the case with Savage Sensei's class which had to finish, just as he was developing some other aspects of using the jo. Gentil Pennewaert Sensei also taught some of Sensei's weapons system in his class. He concentrated on the first two sword patterns and very clearly passed on a number of the points that he had heard Sensei emphasise about these patterns.

In his class on Saturday morning Robert Botterill Shihan also showed his in-depth understanding of Sensei's use of weapons and their underlying general aikido principles. First he taught Ni-no ken, the second sword pattern, and then he demonstrated how to replicate a similar form, with the person in the 'oshiette' (teacher's) role using a jo instead of a bokken. He then continued the theme, by teaching an empty hand version of Shomen uchi irimi nage which had the same feeling as the beginning part of the previous two exercises.

I heard the same compliment, which I think would be one of the nicest compliments to receive, given to two of the instructors after their respective classes. Someone said of both Tony Smibert Shihan and Hanan Janiv Shihan that their classes had the same energy or feel as being in a class with Sugano Shihan. Again I feel this reflects an understanding of yet another aspect of Aikido by these two instructors. Of course, there is a deep sense of loss because of the passing of Sugano Sensei, and no individual can or would claim to be able to replace him, however each of these instructors and all the others previously mentioned here, who had followed Sensei for a long time, were able to pass on in their own way, the legacy of his teaching.

In fact overall, the most striking feature for me was the individuality of the instructors at the Summer School. All instructors who were long time students of Sensei had their "own" Aikido. I don't believe that this was a result of some instructors having had different training experiences, but reflects something else more important which goes to the essence of Aikido. Aikido is ultimately about developing each person into who they are, and not trying to mould them into some predetermined ideal. I remember what Sensei said many years ago, after the first two Australians, Tony Smibert Shihan and Mr Brian Diblee both successfully tested for San Dan. Each of the gradings had its own particular quality and after the grading Sensei made the comment that by about the level of Sandan, a person's individuality starts to come out in their Aikido. I believe that Sugano Shihan not just expected, but encouraged each person to grow in their own way, through their involvement with Aikido. So it is to be expected that all the long time students of Sensei who taught at the Summer School were going to seem different at one level. At another level they were all identical, in that they were passing on the understanding of Aikido that they had developed through their many years of training under Sugano Shihan and they were doing this as people who had grown through the process of the training that they had undergone.

Just as the direct students of O'Sensei passed on the art that he developed to the next generation, I think that the Summer School was not only a wonderful celebration of the life and achievements of Sugano Shihan, but was a great opportunity to see that the legacy that he left behind, is in the capable hands of so many gifted instructors who are able to pass that legacy to others.

To organise such a large event as this special Summer School was, is an incredible undertaking that involved countless hours of effort by so many people, particularly senior people in the hierarchy and people who live in Melbourne. However I would again like to particularly thank Beverley Webster, on behalf of everyone in the organisation, who worked so hard and did such a wonderful job in organising this mammoth undertaking and who was pivotal in making it such a wonderful success.

Top and bottom, Louis van Thieghem Sensei.



Above, Louis van Thieghem with Uke Chris Seto-Payne
Below, Phillip Lee Sensei

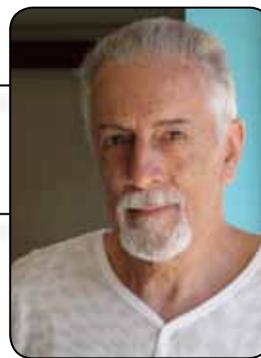


These images by Tony Naughton capture the excitement and fluidity of movement inherent in Aikido when practiced at a high level.

left from top...bokken practice, Phillip Lee Sensei, Louis van Thieghem with uke Tristan Derham, Jack Sato Sensei (resident of WA), bottom, from Belgium, Alain Dujardin Sensei, Aziz Belhassane Sensei, Louis van Thieghem Sensei, Christian Vandecasteele.

No Clones in Aikido

by John Litchen 4th Dan



Ideally there should be no 'clones' in Aikido.

What does this mean?

In many martial systems the passing on of technical information is done through the teaching of kata or forms. In many cases much of this technical information was not written and had to be memorised. As in African music and its derivatives around the world the means of remembering tradition and knowledge was through repeated choruses around which an inspired lead singer could improvise and tell stories or pass on new information. In northern Europe poetic sagas were used to hand down tradition, history and cultural information. People more easily remember poetry and verse and song choruses than they do prose stories which tend to become modified by repetition until the original no longer exists.

In the case of martial arts, so distortions and diminution would not occur techniques that were known to work on the battlefield were passed on using set forms or kata, which were not allowed to be modified or changed. Over generations strict adherence to these forms within many martial systems has produced some very beautiful and stylised kata with each participant an exact or as near an exact replica as possible as the original teacher. There was no allowance for individuality, no allowance for experimentation, the form had to be studied and repeated exactly. In time many of the movements within the form that are meant to preserve information no longer mean much to the practitioner whose focus is maintained on reproducing the form as exactly as possible rather than understanding what it is he or she is studying.

This method as good as it has proved to be results in many clones or near clones of the teacher who is also a clone of his teacher and so on back down the line to the original master.

The method of studying through kata was fine as long as the world around the students didn't change. But the world did change and today many of these kata that are practiced in various martial arts systems are beautiful in a mechanical way but have no meaning other than being an athletic exercise, albeit martially oriented. They are in effect little different from body training at a gym or athletic preparations for an Olympic games.

O'Sensei didn't use kata. He could see the world changing rapidly around him. He had been involved in the beginnings of modern warfare and could see that the old means of passing on information was no longer pertinent. As he evolved through life and death situations he came to understand that continual change was normal and that fixed ideas or methods simply were not effective, so when he began teaching what he was continuously studying and evolving he eschewed kata and fixed forms for the concept of spontaneously developed applications that depended on the interaction of the two combatants as they moved together rather than depending on doing something specific as a response to when the other did a certain thing. He could see this wouldn't work.

His students at the time he began teaching were all trained in some martial art —He rarely accepted students who had not come recommended— yet each of them was an individual, with different body size, strength and personality. He did not believe

in making them try to adhere to idea of copying him, their teacher, so he allowed them the freedom to evolve as individuals. He rarely repeated a technical application twice, claiming that every time he did it, it was different, a new technique, a new response to an attack that may appear to be the same but was in effect also different. He clearly and continuously demonstrated the spontaneity of technique and his students never knew what he was going to do at any time so they too had to be absolutely alert to be able to respond instantly to the unexpected to prevent getting injured. It was this spontaneity, the studying of principles rather than technical applications that allowed his students to evolve individually so that their Aikido reflected their personalities and their body shape and way of moving, rather than being an imitation of O-Sensei.

Each generation of students who studied under O-Sensei got something different from him because he himself was continually evolving both as a person and as a martial artist. The Aikido he taught before the Second World War when he was physically at his peak was very different from the Aikido he taught immediately after the war, and again different in the later part of his life in the 1960s. Yet despite that the principles he espoused never changed. The responses changed as a result of changes within himself.

The fact that every student of each generation got something different is reflected in how each of them individually developed. It is also reflected in the way they teach their students and so on down the line. As each of O-Sensei's uchideshi went out on their own and started their own schools, their students were also allowed the freedom of self expression, and it is this freedom that we see today in the many different styles that cross the generations from pre-war to post war periods. When you attend a seminar where there are many different students practicing on the mat at the same time not one of them appears to be doing the same thing, yet all of them are doing a technique based on the same principle. If they had been doing kata they would all be doing exactly the same thing at the same instant and it would look very mechanical, but what appears to be random confusion with people all over the place is actually very controlled as each individual is aware of all that is going on around him even though focus is on the interaction with a partner.

Aikido is difficult because it doesn't teach through kata,—although the forms we practice at the early stages of study may appear to be kata. Right from the start it allows each student to be an individual. It allows each student to find out how their body moves, rather than forcing a specific movement upon them. It teaches them to relax and to accept rather than trying to block and resist. This is the absolute opposite to natural instinct which is to fight back or flee; to be strong and forceful rather than relaxed and non-resistant. Accepting when you feel threatened is extraordinarily difficult to achieve both conceptually and physically but it is what we strive for in Aikido.

Naturally each student wants to be like his teacher and initially the tendency is to copy the teacher which is only natural. The teacher wants us to develop individual expression of principles



Sugano Sensei watching carefully, as he always did, at Winter school 2007

O'Sensei broke with the idea of fixed kata by spontaneously moving....

When I am teaching I try to get people to move spontaneously... My movements may be quite different from one class to another.

If you look at teachers who have a strong style, most of their followers have the same style. With me this has not happened.

As a teacher I am trying to help a person discover and develop feelings from within themselves.

O'Sensei was searching for something and following his ideas. We should continue to search for the same thing he spent his life looking for.

Seiichi Sugano Shihan 8th Dan,

but what we see initially is the outward expression of principles and so it is only natural to try and emulate the teacher, sometimes to the point of copying the teacher's individual quirks, in effect becoming a clone which ceases to progress but simply copies as close as possible what the teacher does. To avoid this outcome it is good to have more than one teacher or instructor so as students we can see different expressions of the same technique as a response to principles, and therefore understand that the technique of our teacher is individually his or her expression and does not have to be slavishly copied, and that we are allowed to develop our own individual response to that same principle.

In other words there is no one way to do anything, but many ways to do the same thing.

Broadly speaking the students from the various Shihan who were uchideshi to O-Sensei can often be recognized by the way they express the underlying principles— at least until their own confidence and ability allows for their individuality to show through. Once this occurs and if they go on to teach they may well be different from their teacher even though their lineage will still be recognizable. In time the students of these students will also grow and individually evolve. So there is or should be continual evolution, not only individually but also collectively, as a group studying under a particular teacher, over time.

To me this is the beauty of Aikido: it allows each student to be an individual, and not a clone of the teacher. It allows each student to come to their own understanding of the application of principles and to create over time— not deliberately but as a matter of evolution —aikido that is and always will be uniquely theirs, an amalgam of their understanding with their personality and the way their body functions.



Warwick Dojo Welcomes the Return of Graham Morris Sensei 6th Dan
a report from Ross Barrell



When Warwick Aikido Club began to operate late in 1989, we had no Yudansha and our highest ranked student only had 4th Kyu! Graham Morris Sensei arranged for special permission from the TTC for the club to hold Aikido classes. It was with Morris Sensei's support, and the support of several of his senior students that our club got its start. Since that time, Warwick Dojo has hosted one or two weekend seminars, featuring Graham, every year attracting students from a number of locations around the south-east corner of the state.

Graham Sensei has recently returned from a two year break from training, so it was with great pleasure that we were able to invite Graham Sensei to give a TTC seminar on the weekend of March 5 and 6. Fourteen Aikidishi attended travelling from Armidale, Brisbane, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

Training weekends at Warwick generally have the quality and feel of a training camp, because most of the students are away from home, so we are all thrown in together and away from distractions such as work and family. Indeed some students bring their family with them so they also can enjoy the hospitality and good spirit of the occasion.

On Saturday Graham Sensei began with basic Tai Sabaki (body movements) and built on these to create classic Aikido techniques and Kokyunage. The Saturday class was completed at 5:00 and everyone adjourned to Ross and Kathy's home for drinks, dinner and conversation.

The atmosphere at training and during dinner and lunch the following day was warm and friendly and everyone shared a common spirit of students refining their understanding of Aikido.

The following day we studied a number of basic grading syllabus techniques followed by sword techniques from shomen uchi using bokken such as kiriage kote (Upward cut to the wrist) and kiriage ura (irimi followed by a cut to the opponent's right arm pit). We then spent some time studying Sugano Shihan's bokken exercise, ichi no ken doza (first sword method). This study was followed by basic jo exercises done in partner practice.

We finished at noon and most of the students adjourned to Elle's coffee lounge for lunch and conversation.



**A Technical Teaching Course in Brisbane
with Andrew Dziejdzic Sensei,
National Area Representative.**

This was the first time I attended a TTC course taken by Andrew Dziejdzic Sensei, National Area Representative for Australia. Perhaps this was the first time he has appeared in Brisbane for such an event; in any case I found it most illuminating in relation to the technical aspects of training. He took time to explain exactly what it is that the Technical Teaching Committee is looking for relating to the basic curriculum.

A selection of techniques were chosen from the various levels of Kyu testing requirements and these were studied in detail in preparation for the grading tests that followed on the Saturday afternoon.

Unfortunately the Brisbane dojo is not very spacious and the mats were crowded with students from all dojos in Queensland - Warwick, Toowoomba, Samford, and the Gold Coast - so at times training had to be in groups if any kind of extended ukemi was involved, otherwise people had to be aware of how they were surrounded and adjust their ukemi accordingly.

I was unable to be there on the Sunday but I believe Dziejdzic Sensei covered basic weapons training and made a point of reminding students that by 1st kyu they should be familiar with weapons and what is required so that when they go for shodan there will be no hesitation in understanding what is asked of them. This would of course include basic suburi, the 7 step Jo form, as well as ichi no ken, ni no ken, and some basic methods of taking a weapon away from an attacker and throwing someone using a Jo.

Report and Photos by John Litchen

A message from Tony Smibert Shihan



This year I will be going overseas a number of times to teach at seminars where Sugano Sensei would have taught himself. It's a sober reminder of how little I know about Aikido when I think of Sensei, and of also how hard he worked during his life-time.

Each of us in our own way now carries the responsibility and obligation to him to do our best to ensure that what was established under his leadership continues to bring benefit to the Aikido community. That community includes future trainees who right now might never have heard of Aikido.

It seems to me that we are actually laying the groundwork for the coming generations of instructors who now rely on older generations still training to ensure that we don't lose impetus or our way.

Many wonderful things happened at Summer School. Perhaps the most wonderful was broad enthusiasm for Sugano Sensei's Foundation, culminating with support at the AGM that it continue to charge studentship, and in so doing, focus on supporting laying down the pathway for the future. When asked to explain the Foundation's aims at the AGM, it suddenly seemed to become clear to me the fundamental difference between the Association (Aiki Kai Australia) and Sensei's Foundation is that the members of an Association naturally expect to see its annual budget focus is on providing services for existing members. The Foundation on the other hand, is a bigger idea, and more



closely related to the mission of Aikido that Sugano Sensei inherited from O Sensei and which he certainly wished us to carry forward.

The Foundation's focus is on protecting all that we have achieved so far, providing first class Aikido to the current generation and preparing the way for the next generation. It has to be on building the future by our efforts today so the Foundation is a trust for the future.

Sugano Sensei was much more than a single individual: and what we carry away from our years with him is a broad concept of Aikido, illuminated by real memories of specific ways to train on the mat. Clearly, this was a shared impression of people from all around the world who came to his commemorative school. We are a community among people from all around the world who came to his commemorative school. We are a community and when we trained together, we almost felt that Sensei himself was present.

I don't have a firm idea about exactly how we are going to achieve all the aims which the Foundation has set for itself, but I do feel very positive about the broad commitment of all the senior instructors here and overseas who are now doing their best to honour Sensei's legacy. Sugano Shihan wanted the Foundation to support their efforts here in Australia, and I think he'd be happy that the Foundation is helping overseas too through the exchange of senior instructors.

Beyond that, the Foundation is already financially assisting TTC courses, various publishing projects and the work started at Summer School to publish footage of the classes taught there — to be made available free online and as a copy-free DVD. The work on this is nearly completed. The Foundation will also establish a number of 'Sugano bursaries' to bring senior instructors to teach in Australia and hopefully help some young Australians to train overseas.

This year's Winter School is the final event in our formal commemoration of Sensei's life and training will be led by a Shihan he very much admired, Osawa Sensei from Hombu. It will be smaller than Summer School but a similarly heart-felt event. Like me a lot of people will be looking forward to training on Mt Banks where along with so many friends from the early days, I had started to grow up a little and to see a bigger meaning in Aikido under Sensei's guidance. Sensei worked hard to show the way so each of us will carry a memory or two as we climb that mountain, and I'm sure even those who never had the chance to go there with Sensei will find it very special.

Sugano Sensei often told me that Aikido was a 'calling' and not a career. I'm sure he believed (despite the evidence) that even I would eventually learn something. He had the big idea that we were worth the effort. It is great that we have collectively decided to make his Foundation a major factor in the ongoing development of Aikido here.

His Foundation was a big and positive idea too — so it's a great thing that it will be able to assist us all to keep his personal mission alive.





Above, and right top Richard Barnes Sensei, Bernie McDonald uke



Mike Abrahams Shihan



Hanan Janiv Shihan



Phillip Lee Sensei



Mike Abrahams Shihan



Louis van Thieghem Sensei



Aziz Belhassane Sensei



Top, David Brown Sensei, Uke Graham Morris Sensei,
below, Mike Abrahams Shihan



Louis van Thieghem Sensei



David Brown Sensei, uke Graham Morris Sensei

Summer School 2011 Photography by Valeriu Campan

Valeriu Campan is an Aikidoka from Bentleigh in Victoria. He is by profession a sports photographer. He kindly agreed to photograph the activities at Sugano Shihan's Special Commemorative Summer School and some of the results are presented here on these pages. This is only a small selection of the 3000 plus images he took during the event. There will no doubt be more posted on the National Website in the near future. Valeriu's photos are on pages 2, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and the back cover. Our other featured photographer, Tony Naughton's images include the front cover and pages 4, 5, 8,9,10,and 11.

Below, Louis van Thieghem Sensei

Felicia Birman Sensei,

far right Tony Smibert Shihan





Hanan Janiv Shihan



Hanan Janiv Shihan



Yamada Shihan with Phillip Lee Sensei



Felicia Birman Sensei



Mike Abrahams Shihan



Phillip Lee Sensei



Aziz Belhassane Sensei



Yamada Shihan with Chuck Mensch



Robert Botterill Shihan



Louis van Thieghem Sensei



SUGANO SHIHAN'S COMMEMORATIVE SCHOOL MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



2011

GUEST OF HONOUR:

Y. YAMADA SHIHAN, 8TH DAN, PRESIDENT USAF

SPECIAL GUESTS:

TAKASE SHIHAN, 7TH DAN, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR NEW ZEALAND AIKI KAI

ABRAMS SHIHAN, 7TH DAN, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS USAF & OTHER SENIOR TEACHERS

Promotions at 2011 Summer School

Shodan:

Shravan Bhurtun Vic
Julie Boydell Vic
Wei Yng Chua Vic
William Foster NT
Charmaine Grace NSW
Fred Mori Vic
Jerry Ormsby Qld
Bora Radonjic Vic
Mike Seward Tas
Len Taylor Vic
Sam Watson NSW
Gaye Webb Tas

Nidan:

Annalise Bennett WA
Julian Brown Vic
Andrew Card WA
Christine Elliott Tas
Richard Head NT
Nancy Ho NSW
Brad Lane Vic
Ben Lewis ACT
Scott Seymour ACT
Miro Susa Vic

Sandan:

Allan Ashard Vic
Anthony Chui Vic
Scot Eggenton Vic
Bodhi McSweeney Tas
Roland Rees Vic

Yondan:

Margaret Carter NSW

Godan:

Alfred Camilleri Vic
Geoff Freeman Vic

Recommended for Godan for 2012:

Margaret Dinan ACT
Ruedi Etter WA
Vivienne Etter WA
Kaye Jenkins Tas
Mark Matcott Vic
James Waller Vic

Shichidan:

Robert Botterill Vic
Hanan Janiv ACT

please mark in your calendar

Hanami Geiko in Deloraine

tentatively scheduled
for September 22 to 25, 2011.

actual dates are to be confirmed but please
mark this time in your calendar along with
optional time for mountain training at
Mt Banks

Preliminary details for Sugano Shihan's commemorative Winter School 2011 Special guest Osawa Shihan

to be held at
Department of Sports and recreation
Narrabeen - Sydney
Sunday 3 July to Friday 8th July

optional follow-on activities at
Mount Banks
Kotodama training on Thursday 7th
July (is a day trip)

Information is now published on the National
Website so please check there for further
details.

Also note: if you are intending to stay in the
camp you need to confirm booking by the
31st May as there is limited space available.

Also note that unlike other years, the 1st
day's training will commence on the Sunday.

The majority of photographs this issue are from Tony Naughton,
(pages 2, 4,5, 8, 9,10,11, plus front cover image of Yamada Shihan,
and Valeriu Campan - official photographer - whose wonderful im-
ages appear on pages 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and back cover.
Images of Sugano Shihan page 13 by John Litchen.

Aikido in Australia

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 2

**Celebration of a Life and Legacy
Sugano Shihan's Commemorative
School, Melbourne, January, 2011**

