

# *Aikido in Australia*

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter  
Volume 3 Number 3

**Celebration of a Life and Legacy  
Sugano Shihan's Commemorative  
School, Sydney, July 2011**



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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.*



Editorial notes:

As everyone knows our three Shihan, Tony Smibert Sensei, Bob Botterill Sensei and Hanan Janiv Sensei have this year been travelling and teaching on behalf of Sugano Shihan and at the invitation of organizations and students who follow Sugano Shihan and his ideals.

In this issue we have some reports from overseas students who have attended these events and I would like to thank them for their kindness and willingness to contribute to this publication.

There are also articles and reports on related matters pertaining to Aikido and training and of course lots of photos. The two main contributing photographers for this issue are Yusuf (Youz) Iqbal, and Justin Cogley, both of whom are from NSW.

Yusuf Iqbal photos: pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 22, 23

Justin Cogley photos: front and back cover, pages 9, 22,

John Litchen photos, pages 13, 14, 16, 18, 19

Nicholas Blackburn photos, pages 17, 20, 21

Thanks to Mike Clarke Sensei of Shinseidokan Karate Dojo for allowing us to reprint his blog comments regarding Hanami Geiko.



Smibert Shihan with Debora Crampton Sensei

Winter School 2011  
report by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei  
National Area Representative



Robert Hill Sensei with Tristan Derham

The Winter School in Sydney in July not only acted as the final part of our farewell for Sugano Sensei - but seemed to mark the beginning of a whole new lease on life for both the teachers and the students of Aiki Kai Australia. As we saw our three Australian Shihans present us with fresh new insights into Sugano Sensei's teachings, we also once again found family echoes in the teaching of our invited visitors from overseas. Of course there were special family echoes of a different kind as Jikou Sugano Sensei taught an afternoon class. The classes by Louis van Thieghem Sensei and Gentil Pennewaert again reminded us of our international family connections, and we were also treated to two classes from Michael Moyses and Michael Ameye, which gave us an insight into the style of teaching at the Global Inner Schools in Belgium - where Tony Smibert Shihan and Hanan Janiv Shihan taught in August this year - Smibert Shihan already having travelled to Belgium twice this year prior to that.

We were honored to also welcome as our Guest Debra Crampton, Sugano Sensei's former wife, who played such a pivotal role in the co-ordination of care and treatment for Sugano Sensei in the final months of his life in New York. We owe Debra a deep debt of gratitude for all she did for Sugano Sensei in this period. (See photo with Smibert Shihan page 2)

For those old enough to remember him, Robert Hill Sensei, formerly of Melbourne, also returned from the UK to teach a class, and we of course had several of our senior local teachers do classes. Given the number of international visitors at our last two national schools, we look forward to making more use of our more senior local teachers in our teaching schedule at future national schools.

This School also saw the successful initiation of a new concept - the Focus Class, during which all those on the mat were split into six groups, and each of six of our senior instructors was given a mere 8 minutes to teach one technique to each of the six groups by rotation. When Osawa Shihan arrived on Wednesday and went straight onto the mat, we knew this would be something different and a fascinating challenge to adapt to a quite different style of teaching. Osawa Shihan was open, clear and charming in his teaching, so everyone gave of their best to adapt again - perhaps aided by a memory of the lessons he gave at the Winter School in Narrabeen from when Sugano Sensei had last invited him as guest instructor.

The planned visit to Mount Banks did not eventuate due to the entire Blue Mountains National Park being shut down due to extreme weather, so another day of training in the dojo was added. At the conclusion of the school, we farewelled Sugano Sensei with a session of kotodama followed by Jikou Sugano's playing the same hauntingly beautiful shakuhachi piece he had played at the ceremony held in New York after Sugano Sensei's passing.

All in all, the Sydney Winter School inspired all those who attended with optimism and hope for a future which suddenly moved into our view, using the same positive energy which Sugano Sensei had given to us in his teaching all his life.



Janiv Shihan with Gentil Pennewaert Sensei



Botterill Shihan with Paul Newland



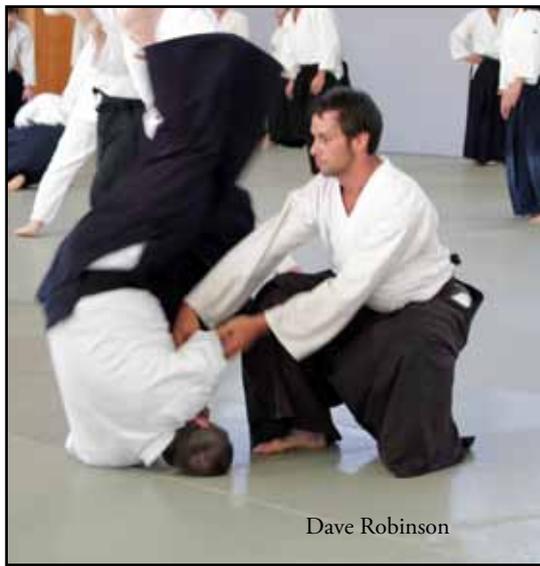
Special guest Osawa Shihan:  
Ukes: Luke Derham, Michael Moyses  
photos by Yusuf Iqbal



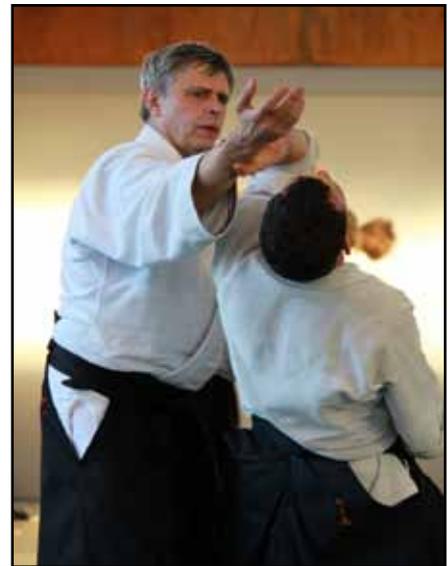
Janiv Shihan



John Watson Sensei



Dave Robinson



Bob Hill Sensei

## A sea-side seminar in Belgium - June 2011

Report by Alain Dujardin - President, Belgium North



I am at the airport waiting for the arrival of Tony Smibert Shihan. Normally when awaiting a Shihan I always detect a certain feeling of nervousness. Did we prepare everything well? No loose ends? What if? And so on..

However this time I am not nervous, as if I already know that all will go well. Instead I have a feeling of anxiousness, like awaiting a next of kin, a family member coming from far away. I had the good fortune of meeting our “Australian relatives” during the last summer school in Melbourne. The feeling I had there was that the Aikido family that was built up around Sugano Sensei during his lifetime of teaching, got together to mourn the loss of “our Shihan” but at the same time to celebrate the life he spent with us and the idea, the path, he showed us.

Now we had to continue without his physical presence to guide us. However it was my hope that Tony Smibert Shihan could keep the fire going in Belgium North and that we could continue our journey that started now 31 years ago... So I was anxious and curious about what was going to happen. And there he was, passing the gate. Tony Smibert Shihan, one of the long-time students of Sugano Shihan, willing to come and help us with our study.

As I was brought up and probably mostly because of my character, I kept my distance and shook hands friendly and politely. I know I should work on that, but find it difficult to leave this habit of safety, hidden in the smog of politeness. As in most things, you should not force this, I guess.

But ok, off we went, towards the sea side. As could be expected, it did not take us long to start talking about Sugano Sensei. And I found in Tony Sensei an enthusiastic and sincere talker in which the love for Sensei really poured out during our conversations. It is a strange but exciting feeling. In Belgium we have a long history with Sensei and sometimes we have the impression that we knew all about Sensei. But now we discover this was not the case by meeting people who have an even longer history with him, up to 15 years longer. How I long to learn more about Sensei, I find myself thinking. There is much more to discover.

As Tony Sensei arrived in Belgium 2 days early, we will have those 2 days to spend as tourists. We went to Ieper (Ypres) on the **1st of June**, where World War I is still omnipresent. We spent the entire day visiting sites that remind us of all the young lives that were given to ensure our current freedom. This day was a strange mix of conversations about death and as a natural counterweight also about life. Needless to say that during these conversations Sugano Sensei was with us, the way he lived, but also the way he died. When resting a bit on Hill

60, one of the impressive reminders of places of death, we find ourselves enthusiastically and gratefully talking about our family, about life, about youth and old age, about how to live and how to go. One of the nice encounters on Hill 60 was to see a grandmother walking there with her two grandchildren running and playing around. The grandmother filled with memories and gratitude, the young children just enjoying life, unaware of what came before.

We end this day attending “the last post” and went back to our sea side resort.

On **June 2nd** we went to Bruges, where we were met by Rudy De Klerck, an “old-timer” with 50 years of Budo practice. He guided us around Bruges while trying to avoid the big crowd that was there because of the “Holy Blood Procession” that was going on. That way he managed to show us some of the beauty of Bruges without getting caught in the crowd. And as a good fortune, just before we were about to return to the parking, we ended up in a street where the Procession was just about to pass by. By a strange coincidence we were almost able to see from front row and the Procession was just at the begin-point. After this we said goodbye to Rudy and Veronique, and drove back to the sea resort.

The resort, that was so quiet the day before, now was getting more and more crowded, as the extended weekend was starting and people from inside the country were all moving towards the coast. The Aikidoka also started arriving, so I had the pleasure of introducing Tony Sensei to all of them during our evening meal. And this introduction happened in a non-formal way, Tony Sensei immediately showed himself as a sympathetic person and the introductions were done in a loose and friendly manner. The tone was set immediately; this was going to be a seminar with a sympathetic person guiding us along.

**June 3rd**, start of the seminar. I had arranged Tony Sensei to arrive at the location of the seminar about 25 minutes prior to every start of a class. And what I was hoping for, happened. People got to meet Tony Sensei, could have a little conversation before class, take a picture, and so on. Five minutes before class everybody lined up and the silence returned. Just before I took the word I realized that without thinking about it, we had put Sensei’s chair in its normal location, with the 2 bottles of water we used to provide him. Why did we do that? I wondered. It looked so normal. As if this chair needed to be there.

After a short introduction Tony Sensei started class. Class was both intensive and informative. Tony Sensei has a way of combining technical work with short but interesting mental injections, what I call “Food for Thought”; just as we were used to with Sensei. As Sensei used to say “The

information must be given. It is not necessary that it is understood immediately, but it must be given”.

During break and after class I saw beginners spontaneously going to talk to Tony Sensei, this was for me a clear indication that Tony Sensei achieved what I was hoping for; he really made contact with our students. During one of the classes Tony Sensei made the remark that there are a lot of young people staying at the back and he invited them to come forward next class. And they did. They overcame their fear and shyness and positioned themselves in the front. I haven't seen that happen a lot.

During the seminar days again I had a lot of opportunities to talk with Tony Sensei, and during one of the private conversations we somehow got into a more than normal intensity of talking about Sensei. I learned some things I am really grateful for and I assume Tony Sensei also learned some things about me and my personal relation towards Sensei. I mention this fact because our talk resulted in Tony Sensei “breaking the ma ai” towards me, the safety of the distant hand-shaking was replaced by a family-member hug. And it was a “*honne*” hug, not “*tatema*”...

During the seminar we had Aikikai Dan Shiken. Tony Sensei accepted my invitation to attend, however not being part of the examination table. He positioned himself modestly with the other viewers and after the Shiken he insisted on staying for a while to congratulate and talk with the candidates... Another spontaneous token of sympathy towards our members that will not be easily forgotten.

Meanwhile I received only positive comments about the way Tony Sensei guided us along. The way he insisted on saying that he has not come to be “the teacher” or “to replace Sugano Sensei”, but rather “to be a fellow student” and “to search together with all of us” was very well received by all participants. I received comments like “He is exactly like Sensei 10 years ago”, “he is very approachable”, “he is very capable and sympathetic in his way of teaching”, “he can help us along in the practice as Sensei showed us” ...

Even from our most critical seniors I got only positive comments, although one of them had to add “he talks too much” as a minor criticism. I am not sure if this was to be seen as a negative point, from my point of view I really appreciated these mental injections, this food for thought.

Just as with Sensei, there was the physical training during the seminar which has to be intensive and serious. However once the seminar ends this effect disappeared quickly. But to my limited experience the mental food we got from Sensei and now again from Tony Sensei, keeps working long after the seminar and makes you continue to search in the weeks and months after such a seminar. And by doing so, I believe you can make progress even when the guide is not physically there.

During the seminar Tony Sensei also gave specific suggestions about Aikido for the different generations and how those generations can train together but at the same time according to their current stage in life.

So we got a little taste of it by doing keiko for the youth,

but also experiencing the keiko for seniors. Again very useful tips we can use in our federal commitment towards the youth department and the senior department that we are slowly introducing in the federation.

Things that kept sticking to my mind were sayings like “it is not about learning the techniques, it is about learning through the techniques”, this applies to the aikido training but just as much to the weapons training, in our case the ken patterns and the 7-count Jo pattern, and of course the exercises around them.

The last day of the seminar: My attention gets drawn to that chair again. I think I believe that Sensei was with us during the seminar. I also think he would approve the way the seminar unrolled itself. It was not about a replacement, it was about a continuing journey on a path that was so gracefully shown to us by Sensei during these past 31 years.

The path, the idea is still there, maybe even more alive than ever. There are guides that can help us continue along that path. I feel happy and with a little end-speech and small token of appreciation the seminar ended. Tony Sensei seemed to have the same feeling as we all did: a feeling of being at the right place, being in the right environment, among the people that wish to study the kind of Aikido that Sugano Sensei showed us.

Don't limit ourselves to just training some techniques, but really study and develop the inner Aikido feeling, the deeper study of this beautiful path of peace.

Thank you for the guidance, Tony Sensei!

The participants said goodbye as they went back home, the silence returned to the sea resort as Tony Sensei and myself stayed until the next morning.

Since Tony Sensei remained in Belgium another two days, again we got the opportunity to have many interesting conversations, and of course to do some *tourisme*. On Monday we visited Ghent where I could show Tony Sensei some of the historical beauty of “my city”, and in the evening Tony Sensei agreed to teach class in my dojo.

On Tuesday then I took him to Brussels where Tony Sensei could witness the “birth” of the Sugano Trust Belgium, a noble initiative that was initiated during the summer school in Melbourne and that now got put into reality. In the evening Tony Sensei gave class in the dojo of Louis Van Thieghem, with Aziz Belhassane present as one of the members of the Sugano Trust Belgium. At the end of this class Tony Sensei briefly explained the idea and purpose behind this Sugano Trust Belgium and thanked us all for the way he was welcomed. Finally we ended with an emotional and thankful gesture towards Sugano Sensei.

The next morning Tony Sensei was said “goodbye, until next time” at the airport by Louis Van Thieghem and myself. And this time I did no longer consider the hand shake.

Alain Dujardin  
President Belgium North

**Shin Do Kan Dojo Summer Camp**  
**Dedicated in Memory of Sugano Seiichi Shihan, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan**  
**June 2011**  
**Report and photos from Keith Russell**

Shin Do Kan dojo held our inaugural summer camp in memory to Sugano Seiichi Shihan this past June. With his passing we lost a great man who dedicated his life to teaching Aikido throughout the world. He touched many lives on his journey through life including our sensei. The Shin Do Kan dojo's sensei, Pennewaert Shidoon, was Sugano's otomo for many years, forming a strong everlasting bond between the two. This lasting bond made dedicating our first summer camp to Sugano Shihan a very special occasion for all of us who had the honor to have known him.

It is said that Aikido power is like a serene mountain lake, reflecting the wisdom and the fullness of spiritual energy, and that each of us... our heart, mind, body, and spirit vertically unite heaven and earth.

For this reason we chose the tranquil setting of the El Capitan nature resort, located in southern California, for the Shin Do Kan dojo's first summer camp. Nestled in a seaside pocket on 300 plus acres on the picturesque Pacific coast, the nature lodging experience at El Capitan Canyon was created for those who have the desire to totally unwind, relax and commune with nature.

To make this first summer camp a memorable occasion, Pennewaert sensei invited a special guest teacher - Hanan Janiv Shihan 7<sup>th</sup> Dan. Janiv kindly accepted our invitation to teach at this special event. As he was also very close to Sugano sensei, we knew Janiv sensei would be the right choice.

It was clear from the beginning that Janiv sensei embodied Sugano's philosophy of Aikido, not only in his Aikido, but in his daily life.



*Aikido is a way. There is commitment and there is obligation. Do not abuse or misuse the art of Aikido. Study carefully, honestly and humbly. Respect your seniors and look after your juniors.*  
*Seiichi Sugano Shihan 1939 - 2010*

From the moment Janiv Shihan stepped on the mat we knew that we were in for a very rewarding learning experience. He used humor to emphasize proper technique such as relating the Australian bush to using our legs and not our backs. Both on and off the mat, whether a junior or senior student, Janiv influenced us all. We have included just a few comments from the students.

*"One of the things that I liked about Janiv Sensei, from the first moment I saw him, was his good-natured smile. This same smile, which shined upon us frequently during the seminar, along with the kindness that radiates from Janiv Sensei, created much uplifting energy and made training more fun. Being a physics nerd, I also loved how he used physics concepts to illustrate the essence of Aikido techniques. Thus, his powerful techniques were reinforced by his vast knowledge. Nevertheless, Janiv Sensei maintained a very humble attitude and was happy to converse with any one of us. " Shodan student*

*"I feel very fortunate and honored by the opportunity to have spent time with Janiv Sensei during the Shin Do Kan Sugano Shihan summer camp memorial. I was truly inspired by the depth of which he has seamlessly integrated his love of Aikido into the fabric of his soul. In addition to his humble approach to all things, I discovered a very philosophical and intellectual awareness Janiv Sensei possesses pertaining to all things. I was also very fascinated when he revealed his passion for creating works of art from personally selected exotic wood he finds in nature. My time with him has positively expanded and built upon my journey in Aikido while providing guidance for becoming a better human being! Thank you Janiv Sensei for a fantastic summer camp!" Nidan student*

*"My excitement and expectations for the Sugano Summer Camp grew as the days counted off. When I met Janiv sensei my first impression was how warm he welcomed us with his humble and peaceful presence. Training with him was both rewarding and exciting. I really enjoyed how he related the structure and principles of Aikido to physics and the universe using analogies to help convey key points in his teaching. This was just one of many aspects that made for an interesting and exciting class. Summer camp delivered everything I had hoped for and more... My sincere thanks to Janiv sensei for sharing his time and Aikido with us." 4th Kyu student*

It is easy to see that Janiv Shihan made a lasting impression on the students. Whether it was his infectious smile or his knowledge of Aikido, we all enjoyed the time with Janiv sensei. We thank him for traveling such a long distance to share his Aikido knowledge with us. We hope to have the opportunity to meet with him again.

## A Conversation about the Organization with Smibert Shihan 7th Dan

*It is now over a year since Sugano Shihan passed away.*

*Recently I had an opportunity to speak with Smibert Shihan to get his thoughts on what has been happening since then and to garner some idea of our future directions.*

*Editor.*



*Smibert Shihan remembers Sugano Shihan saying to a class many years ago :*

***‘In most areas of life in the West we’re asked to question everything. This might be the one part of your life where you have the opportunity to take it on faith.’***

*I often hear reference to Sugano Sensei’s legacy, but I’m not aware of what that is. What has he left us that is tangible rather than intangible? And is it open to interpretation by anyone when they refer to something as ‘his legacy’?*

Well, you’ve identified 3 important elements.

First of all he left us something structural. Secondly he left us something which is intangible, and thirdly much of what he left us is open to the interpretation by the individual because he left a lot of people who he trained personally and individually.

I think his idea was that through training in Aikido we each become more who we actually are. What we share is that we grew up in the same family. Sensei’s model of teaching and the physical structure of Aikido as he taught it is something we all inherited. Beyond that, the intangible and probably the most unique element – and where Australia would stand out- is that we had one of the greatest of the teachers outside Japan, plus we were with him for a very long time. I don’t think there is any other place quite the same. We have a lot of people who have been training for 35 to 45 years. So many people still following him so closely over all that time! That’s a key part of his legacy.

*Other Shihan who are or were Sensei’s contemporaries have left a defined body of work — books and videos — to which their current students, teachers and future students can refer. Sugano Sensei never wrote a book and only recently has allowed videos to be made available. All we have for reference are some interviews given over the years, but there is not a lot there. Does this mean we must rely on remembered information from Sensei’s senior students who may all have remembered different aspects of what he was teaching, and who may very well interpret them in ways individual to them rather than to what Sensei actually wanted to pass on?*

Since Sensei passed away I’ve taught at four of his regular overseas seminars, and one of the interesting things is that there is a lot of material he did allow to be filmed and videotaped; a

substantial library of material, which we are hoping to assist in bringing together and making available in various ways. That’s one of the deeply significant projects the Foundation would like to take on.

I think the reason Sensei didn’t encourage videos, although he sometimes agreed to them, was that he didn’t believe people could or should learn from video. He always saw such things as supplemental to training. So that if you were already studying, then a video might provide a memory or reference point. That was his feeling.

The earliest reason I remember him giving for not wanting to be filmed was that he didn’t want his Aikido to be fixed, as his aikido was constantly evolving. And if you do look back at those early films and videos of him taken over many years and particularly the early period when some of us started training you’ll find that Sensei’s Aikido then was completely different... because of course he came here as a fantastic, 25 years old Hombu dojo instructor. But nearly 50 years later, he passed away as a genuine old master because he’d kept studying and growing and evolving his understanding.

That brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> point you made, that the real repository of Sensei’s teaching lies in each of the individuals he taught... and that’s why the ‘hierarchy’, our collective of people is so important.

Sensei was very strongly of the mind that it’s the individual who will evolve their Aikido, so that teachers simply have a responsibility to keep studying themselves and to pass on the form and model. This means teaching to the best of their knowledge based on a commitment to continued study... The thing that keeps us all together is that we had such an incredible teacher for so long, someone who didn’t just become good at Aikido but continued to study as a student himself right to his very last breath.

continued on page 14 -15



Winter School Photos: Yusuf Iqbal top: ...Louis van Thieghem, Debra Crampton, Kaye Jenkins, Tony Smibert, Debra Crampton, Dave Robinson.... Botterill Shihan bottom. Jikou Sugano, Osawa Shihan, Louis van Thieghem, Robert Hill Sensei and Kaye Jenkins,, Osawa Shihan, Louis van Thieghem

*here is something we can all look forward to...*

An Exciting Proposal for a Documentary film  
by Tristan Derham, Vice President

Late last year, Robert Castiglione (Fremantle dojo) and I were talking about Aikido films. Robert is a filmmaker with over ten years' experience making documentaries and dramas for broadcast and festival release. He confided to me that he has long dreamed of making a documentary that would capture the spirit of the Aikido we practice - the student body that comes together to train, the individuals that follow one path yet have developed diverse individual characteristics, the beauty of the physical form. This idea grew as we turned it over and considered the possibilities - using existing film stock of Sugano Sensei, shooting new action footage, interviews, the stories of Sugano Sensei and the students that follow his direction. Such a film would go a long way towards promoting Sensei's legacy.

With encouragement from the Teaching Committee

we put forward a proposal for funding to which the Sugano Foundation has now promised support. Robert will make the film as a volunteer and supply all the equipment he'll use - some of the highest quality gear used in the film industry today.

The final product will be a thirty minute documentary fit for television, film festivals and distribution on the web. With help from students across the country we hope to undertake all the planning before the end of the year and begin shooting in January 2012. It's an ambitious project and we will need help from students both junior and senior, so if you are interested in sharing your ideas or your time, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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### A Request for our newsletter

John Litchen, our editor has been running the newsletter for over twelve years now.

He's the current editor and also the successor to a long line of people who have done a great job over the years, but under John the newsletter has gone from strength to strength. It looks wonderful and is now collected by people all around the world. We are all taking it over seas and giving it to people as a gift.

One of the biggest challenges that John faces is getting good material.

It's worth noting that the newsletter is very different from our website which is essentially a regular bulletin where you go to find what's happening now, and for the latest notices and information. The newsletter however focuses on articles of lasting interest, and that includes articles about teaching by teachers, about events, reports on events, reports on things that are going on overseas, and an enormous amount really good photo material sourced from all sorts of contributors. One of the things he really is looking for right now is articles from our senior people. Generally speaking the senior people don't want to stick their heads up and do it. Many of them don't think they have a story to tell which is quite wrong. We really need students of the senior people all over the country to "interview your teachers, please" and give us the material that

you write about them. We're interested in their story in Aikido, the story of the dojos where you train, your State organisation, of the people who've come and gone, of what they've learned in Aikido, what they think about Aikido, what they remember of Sugano Sensei, what they've learned from him,; all sorts of things. We're interested in day to day anecdotal material. We're particularly interested in material that has a positive outlook, not a negative outlook.

The newsletter is a community exercise supposed to bring us all together. We've got a terrific system of publishing. I'm hoping that everyone will look hard at each other and at whether they might be able to write stories about each other if they won't write about themselves.

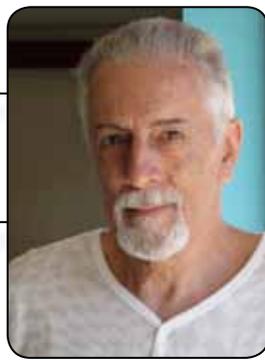
And please contact John as quickly as you can. And remember, a newsletter article needs to be no longer than 1500 words, with some good photos - that would be great - photos that show the person you are interviewing as they were, as they are now. Include those as well. And if you can't get them to talk about themselves then talk to people who they've taught and let them tell you what they think of the person that you're writing about. Let's tell the stories of some of these people who've contributed so much over so many years.

*signed: Tony smibert*



## Training at an Older Age

by John Litchen 4th Dan



Training at an older age is something all of us will experience sooner or later....

If you look around you will see that a large percentage of the people training at any class, seminar, training school or gasshuku are fifty years or more while the rest, often less than half the numbers, are younger.

How you train at an older age is going to be dependent on several factors — your actual age, the age you think you are, and your physical condition. If you think of yourself as being old, the tendency is to act like that. On the other hand if you always imagine yourself to be younger than you are, again you will act accordingly. These perceptions are subconscious and although we are often unaware of them they do have a major influence on how we present ourselves to the world around us.

If you started Aikido when you were much younger then the way you can practice at an older age will differ greatly from someone who started Aikido much later in life. I believe it is never too late to start no matter what age you are, but you must take into consideration your physical ability to move, reaction time, and your muscle strength some of which may be lacking at an older age. However this shouldn't be discouraging if you are careful and do not try to do what younger people or experienced people can do, but stay within the limits you are capable of managing. These you will discover quickly once you start.

In my case, I started Aikido when I was fifty years old. Until I was forty-seven I had not done any martial art other than some 3 months of Judo when I was at University High School back in 1956. I am now seventy one years old. I started Karate when I was forty seven because I had to take my son to training and decided since I was there for the duration I might as well join in. We used to train 5 days a week, and it was here, although I was fit because I had always led an active life which at one point involved a lot of scuba diving and skindiving, I discovered that I was not able to match the teenage students or those in their early twenties, in speed or agility. There was a 30 year age gap, and there is no way you can bridge that no matter how young you think you are.

I gave up Karate after 3 years, and in 1989 while on a long trip to South America with my wife and son, I found I missed the training and together we looked for something else and discovered Aikido. Jorge Rojo who was at that time the technical director of Aiki Kai Chile explained that age wasn't a problem especially considering that I was fit and healthy, but nevertheless he would take into consideration my age of fifty when he was teaching. He was very good in this, as were all the senior students in his dojo. They always trained with me at a level that I was capable of understanding and doing. As result I progressed at a good pace for the three months I was there. Also my son and I went to the dojo to practice every day except Saturday, and Sunday when they didn't have classes.

No one thinks they are as old as they are.

Ask anyone how old they feel and invariably the answer will be somewhere around ten years younger than their actual age.

Why is that? My theory is that because in actuality we are not physically any older than that. Every cell in a human body is replaced over and over— *every cell*. For some cells like cartilage it could be over a ten year period while every other cell on average is replaced over a seven year period. Skin cells however are replaced every few weeks.

Other questions arise: With the oldest cell in your body no more than ten years old why is it that we look older? Why don't we retain our youthful looks for ever or at least until we die? The answer lies in transcription errors caused by the poisonous effects of oxygen as a free radical molecule. We need oxygen to live, but the same dangerous stuff is also slowly killing us. It causes the genes that determine cell replacement to sometimes make errors. These errors are then replicated during which more errors can be made and again replicated. In effect each new cell is not an exact copy of itself but a slightly inferior copy. As this goes on over the decades our cells although relatively young produce an aged body. It shows up first with the skin which loses elasticity and becomes more and more wrinkled. Skin cells are replaced every few weeks so after many more replications than cells that make up other organs, the errors become visible sooner.

What does this mean to someone who wants to take up Aikido after they are fifty if they haven't had an active life? It means that their muscles won't have the same strength or flexibility of someone younger. It means that their reaction time to something happening will be slower. Their ability to learn something new may take longer to process and become embedded. Aikido is initially difficult for many people because they must learn to move differently; often quite a lot different to what they have become accustomed to doing over their whole lifetime to that point. They must in effect retrain their core body movements which at first will seem extremely awkward, but in time will become to be considered very natural. Everyone, young and old goes through this experience, and unless they actually get on the mat and try they will never be able to appreciate this, because it is not obvious from sitting on the side and watching. The older you are when you start the more difficult it is and for those who have started at an older age and continue on I have nothing but admiration because I know how hard it can be.

Those who started young and have grown older and still practice may be discovering they are not as agile as they once were, that they are more prone to injuries which inevitably take longer to heal, and so they too come to the realization that they cannot practice in the way they did when they were younger. They must of necessity adapt their training to suit their age, perhaps preferring to train with other older Aikidoka rather than the more vigorous young ones. Although they may be slower, they most likely have learnt over many years to be more economical with movement, to internalize it more, and to have better timing in relation to when they must move, which may even though they are slower, appear to be faster. And because they move at exactly the right instant they don't need to use muscle strength to any



Atemi waza creating Iriminage Omote from Chudan Tsuki attack.



Geoff Sexton enjoying training



Ross Barrell, Kathy McCarthy, enjoying the training at Mudgeeraba

great degree. Often their application is incredibly more effective which often seems astounding to a younger, stronger and seemingly more active person. It's a wonderful contradiction.

The later you begin the more problems you can have with overcoming the fear of falling. This is an ingrained and most likely subconscious fear and results in injuries such as elbow and shoulder damage, or sometimes overstretching of the neck by incorrectly rolling backwards. Younger students need to realize that older people, just as beginning students, need time to position themselves to take the fall or ukemi in the best way possible, and so they should be allowed to do this at their pace and not at a pace dictated by the younger Nage. In other words Nage always needs to adapt practice and application to the speed and ability of the Uke, and not just plough straight through.

And for the older Uke, the more relaxed you can allow yourself to become, the more easy you will be able to feel what is about to happen and adapt to it. As Uke, you set the pace of the attack which should determine the pace of the response. If the response is not in accord with what you can handle, tell the other person, and if they don't slow down or try to adapt to you, excuse yourself and find someone else to practice with. This shouldn't be a problem at a large seminar or national school, but may be more difficult in a dojo when there could only be a few students at any one time. In this case it is up to the instructor to make sure each person is training in accordance with the ability of their partner so that learning is fostered and injuries are less likely to occur. The end result being that everyone, young or old should enjoy the training and should always come away feeling good.

For the older person, it may be necessary to practice quite slowly and there is no reason why this can't be done. It could almost be as slow and beautiful as Tai Chi. It does need both partners to agree to practice at a slower speed, so each has time to do what they need in order to protect themselves. Once confidence is gained the training can be done a little faster, but no more than either one can handle, and certainly not at the high speed often enjoyed by younger students. I think the younger student often misses the point of the exercise by training too fast. Mistakes are made and never corrected so eventually they become ingrained and the focus is too much on the final application rather than the principle that leads to various applications. Whereas with the older person, because they are practicing more slowly there is time to study principles to see how they lead into applications, rather than focus on the end result of the technical application.

Generally speaking most students are good with each other, always willing to adapt, but sometimes an odd one needs to be reminded. As Sugano Shihan said in his moral code which we should all remember:

**Respect your seniors and look after your juniors.**

This is a very important point to remember. We should all look after our juniors, because what they bring to the training is an open mind and a willingness to learn. If seniors don't remember that how can they expect to be respected by their juniors?

Attitudes are very important. There is no place for arrogance in the dojo. This should be left outside. There is no place for the feelings that some are better than others because the truth is they are not. They are all students at different moments in their exploration of Aikido, and a senior should remember that the awkwardness the junior or beginner at whatever age feels is something they too have felt in the past. After all every senior was one a beginner and a junior. There is always someone senior to you just as there is always someone junior to you.

What should be brought into the dojo is humbleness and respect, and a willingness to adapt whatever one's level may be to that of their training partner so both can have an enjoyable experience while progressing within themselves.

## Four Life-Stages of Training

by Tony Smibert Shihan

There are four clear life-stages for an Aikido trainee — childhood, young adult, middle life and older — and different issues associated with each stage. Recognising these exist is of primary importance if you are entering or maintaining training at any of them. Alongside this, we have the growth of the Aikido person, which in one sense only begins when you start training. If a person enters when very young and trains very hard, they might reach a high level of maturity while still a young adult — and Sugano Sensei himself was an example of this. Or, alternatively, a person might start late in life and have to address fitness issues which would seem to be addressed easier by a younger person. Whatever the stage of your life and whatever your Aikido maturity, the idea is that we should all continue to train and make progress through ongoing study. Consequently Aikido becomes part of a fulfilling life journey. But if we are not aware that these stages occur or fail to accommodate them in our dojos, then people may be forced out through injury, disappointment, or the feeling of not being able to keep up - or even being 'in the way'.

It is a misconception that we can train in the same way through-out life and there is a very strong cultural awareness of this in Japan, based on centuries of Budo tradition and generations of Aikido practice. Yet outside Japan the situation is very different. Here, in Australia we have a relatively large number of senior people who have all trained a long time. We have a largely middle-aged training population made up of people in the third stage - the baby boomers. Their predominance may not attract young people and those who do start young today may not be getting the sort of intensive and challenging training appropriate to young adulthood. At the same time, those who are over 60 may be feeling a lack of purpose, and starting to doubt their capacity to train "hard enough". This would NOT happen in Japan, where you are far more likely to find the older trainees happily training with less 'impact' and the younger people flinging each other around. Most interesting, it's quite common there for younger trainees to ask their older seniors for training — so that the older sempai throws the younger junior again and again after class (without taking ukemi) and both end up exhilarated.

This is something we need to look at very carefully and reflect on what we can do to facilitate change. It's an important element in the maturing of our organisation and a natural part of its progression. John Litchen's article in this issue gives an interesting perspective because he is himself a trainee over 70 years old. We all have our own perspective. I have my own, having trained since I was in my mid-teens and now in my early 60's with the physical benefits and disadvantages arising from a lifetime of training. Andrew Dziedzic put this very clearly to me the other day; saying that he thinks the issue is about 'changing our collective mind-set'. Aikido gets more and more exciting and rewarding all the time, so I am very seriously interested in how to progress my own training for many more years! The TTC will include this issue in the upcoming instructors' course and we look forward to hearing the perspective of others.

Once again, we are fortunate in having the model of Sugano Sensei, who enjoyed the most robust youthful training, then maintained his personal study throughout middle age, and his older years as an amputee. Aikido is a mind-body discipline, based on physical activity appropriate to the individual. We have to maintain a dojo-culture which remains true to the Aikido spirit where each person can address the physical side of Aikido at a level which will bring forth their very best no matter what age they are and for as long as they want to keep training.

continued from page 9

*Is there a distinction between Aiki Kai Australia and the Foundation, and how do they interact with each other?*

They are very different. But like left and right hands they can achieve things together that might otherwise be impossible.

If you look at the way that government recognised sports are organized in Australia, there is always a clear distinction between the administration and the technical experts. The government guidelines are that both aspects need to be as separate as possible.

Well it's been that way in Aikido from the beginning. We formally established Aiki Kai Australia in 1975 originally to assist Sugano Sensei who was, unquestionably, the technical authority. Beyond that, he was never just a technical director. He was much, much more.

Then as he came towards the end of his life and needed our assistance we helped him to establish his Foundation. It was his own private business and initially, really just a way of managing his personal finances. But then it evolved into much more and just before his passing he seated his personal authority within the foundation. Clearly he knew what was happening to him health-wise and that he wasn't going to be around to care for us in the future. I heard Sensei describe the role of a shihan as being to 'care for' the students. So the Foundation came to represent him in a unique way.

The Foundation is rather special in that it's not just the three trustees of the Foundation who matter; it's the entire very large number of very senior people we have overall. There's something like eighteen 6<sup>th</sup> Dan or above here, and in a very small country that is an incredible body of knowledge and experience. Many countries have no-one at 6<sup>th</sup> Dan and there are very few countries that have more than one 7<sup>th</sup> Dan or people who have been designated as shihan by Hombu. So we have big group — all of whom Sensei recommended to Doshu as worthy of 6<sup>th</sup> Dan or above.

Also, where the Aiki Kai has elected office bearers, the Foundation consists of people who suddenly found themselves carrying the responsibilities and authority that Sensei himself previously held and who, like him, know it's a lifelong job! Their perspective for the future is strongly influenced by their experience of training with Sugano Shihan in the past, and is fundamental to where we are right now. The Foundation has to think about future generations of students whereas the Aiki Kai primarily has to focus on the current period.

Because the constitution says that the Association exists so as to assist the Foundation — whose responsibility is to maintain the technical and ethical direction of Aikido this leaves the seniors with responsibility to guide as best they can.

The model for this comes from Japan where there is the Hombu dojo and the all Japan Aikido Federation, but guiding it there is Doshu and the Aikido Foundation. The key difference there is that it is seated on a single individual, the Doshu, as we once were on Sensei. Now that Sensei has passed away, we wouldn't want everything here seated on a single person, so we've got this collective-organization that Sensei left us to maintain in good faith — as a trust for the future.

*And that's working well at the moment?*

Well, I think if you were to look at this year since Sensei passed away there were lots of things we really wanted to achieve, some we did and lots we haven't yet achieved. It's been enormous. There's plenty we haven't done yet because we really had no idea of the size of the task that coming when Sensei passed away. For example, all around that time I was being contacted about what would happen overseas and whether we could assist in the other places he'd taught. We had no idea all that was coming...

*What have both organizations done that is successful? What has been aimed for but not yet achieved?*

Well, from what I can see — though I'm not part of the Aiki Kai administration — the Association is functioning better than it ever has.

It's got terrific office bearers working very hard and bringing a wide range of professional skills to bear on behalf of its members. It's now doing all the things that it was set up to do. It effectively manages the overall finances of the association, manages our day to day affairs, maintains the necessary official connections overseas, is putting together the events we need, doing the memberships, and maintaining our legal and insurance obligations... It's doing an excellent job. Looking over to the Foundation, you can see that like the Association this has to work at numbers of levels: Internationally, Nationally, State and locally, right down to the individual dojos.

As an association Aiki Kai Australia is an officially recognized national organization of the Hombu. Ever since 1965 it has been the only officially recognized organization here in Australia. While there are certainly other Aikido dojos and groups in Australia so far no one else has been given official Hombu Recognition as an organization. However we might see that happen sometime soon and that will be fine. Anyway, our own recognition and seniority of our people means that Aiki Kai Australia has an officially recognised grading committee that can give examinations to a very high level. It's through Aiki Kai Australia that we maintain our organisational connection to Hombu and our membership of the International Aikido Federation (IAF).

On the other hand, the international activities of the Foundation are rather different — involving the building and maintaining of connections with Sensei's senior students around the world, and playing a role in supporting them in their work as teachers and assisting them to come to Australia to support us.

The other thing we do is we connect personally to Doshu, not to Hombu. So whereas in the past Sugano Sensei's would fly to Japan regularly to maintain our connection I've had to go, Robert and Hanan have had to go... This sort of connection is now something we have to do, in place of Sensei.

This year, in response to requests and representing the Foundation, both Hanan and I went to teach seminars that would normally have been taught by Sensei. I've been 4 times this year, three times to Belgium and once to Malaysia and Hanan has gone to the US. Next year all three Shihans will be travelling overseas. That's been a very big job, and to some extent a distraction to what we have to do here. I should note that it's the policy of Sensei's foundation that such overseas travel is paid for by the host and not the Foundation.

*In relation to finance, has Aiki Kai done a costing of what it needs to run both organizations over the year?*

Well, the Aiki Kai manages the administration. And at the moment everybody makes a payment which spreads over both organizations. I think the commonest question people ask since Sensei passed away and given that the original purpose of the Foundation was to look after him is: why do we need two organizations?

My own perspective is that it will always cost a certain amount to do the things that need to be done: internationally, nationally and locally. And this includes the things that Sensei used to do himself and that we used to fund him doing — like travel to Japan on our behalf — things that were taken care of just by the presence of Sensei. They still have to be done. Then there are the things that need to be done by our administration...

So let's look at it. We need to maintain not only the administration but also the health and quality of Aikido here and we have to lay the ground for the future. We want to maintain our heritage and our daily activities, and to do what can be done to grow Aikido into the future.

The budget proposals from the TTC to both the Foundation and the Aikikai Board shows that it now costs close to the amount that we're currently paying in our fee to do all of this. While there are some items we could do without — for example the sorts publishing projects which the Foundation plans to fund and bursaries for students to train overseas and to bring extra instructors over and above what

the summer or winter school actually pays for, those are the sorts of items we could certainly cut, but it would be a shame.

We could also change the triaging of the payment so that most of the total we each pay (its just under \$200 now) would go straight to the Aiki Kai, along with many of the functions which the Foundation is now set to do...so that the money and those tasks could both go to the Aiki Kai. For example, at present, the funding for TTC courses comes from Sensei's Foundation and that's reflected in the money that goes to the Foundation. All this could just simply go straight to the Aiki Kai as it used to and then they would pay for all of the TTC activity. I understand we've found its going to take around about \$200 to do what needs to be done, which is why the figure has remained at the figure voted by the AGM. I think you'd find that even if it was all changed around, with only a very small amount going to the Foundation and nearly all expenditure coming from the Association what we needed wouldn't change much at all. Actually, I don't particularly care how it's done — just so long as we can fund what has to be done and maintain the quality of our activities for current AND future students.

*Mostly people aren't concerned about who does what, they are concerned that they are going to get value for their money; I think that's the thing people ask 'what do we get for the money we pay?'*

I don't agree with that. If we think of membership in terms of 'what am I going to get back myself?' the Aiki Kai would not continue to grow or even exist.

The question does not take into account that our whole organisation is based on the efforts of volunteers, from top to bottom. Most of our membership fee just makes it possible for those volunteers to spend huge amounts of time running and building the organization. So we all pay to join and everybody pays to train. Over all of those who are teaching — nobody gets paid or makes an income out of it. Nationwide, everybody gives their professional, personal and family time voluntarily so it's all based on giving, not what will I get back.

We don't get anything back materially — just the opportunity and facilities to train, teach and give of your efforts for free.

*I'm not disputing that at all, I'm just saying that's what some people ask.*

Some people may, but I don't think most do. On the other hand, we all want to know that the moneys we pay are sufficient to the task and spent properly.

Since Sensei died a critical issue for the Foundation ... and the annual general meeting this year supported this 100%... is to maintain quality and lay the ground for future students. I guess we could cut right back on all initiatives and decide that we don't give a damn about the future and only care about this year... But if we did I think our organization would soon falter and collapse: not only because we weren't preparing for that future by training instructors, attracting students, maintaining our responsibilities to Hombu and Doshu and all the rest of it...but simply because the heart would have gone out of it. What holds us together is not material; so personally, I wouldn't care to be involved if our organization suddenly decided it didn't care about where it came from or what it should be doing to look after the future students. I can't believe that's a problem, only the very natural question of identifying just how much money is needed and the certainty that it's being spent appropriately. The TTC recently came up with a budget strategy. Now the Foundation, Board and AGM will have to consider whether it covers what needs to be done by us both in the present and for the future.

## A TTC Weekend at Warwick with Dave Brown Sensei 6th Dan

Report by Ross Barrell 3rd Dan

Warwick dojo is somewhat isolated and as a result we rarely host senior Aiki Kai instructors. In 2004 we were privileged to have Tony Smibert Shihan as our guest for a TTC weekend of training. Robert Botterill Shihan gave a two day TTC seminar here in 2008. On the Weekend of August 20/21 this year we welcomed David Brown Sensei to our dojo for a two day TTC weekend seminar attended by students from Warwick, Armidale, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

Brown Sensei has studied Aikido since the mid 1960's and he was one of Sugano Shihan's original students in Australia. His approach to Aikido is extremely practical.

The focus of the weekend was on timing, distance and direction and how the shapes of the techniques influence outcomes. Brown Sensei's view is that Kaishi Waza (reversals) can only be applied to techniques that are executed improperly and therefore provide an opponent with a gap or opening. So the study we undertook was to execute techniques without openings for an opponent to exploit.

The weekend began with a study of Tai No Henko. Then Morote Dori Ikkyo omote was used to illustrate proper positioning and shape for Ikkyo from any attack. We also looked at Ikkyo omote and Irimi Nage from gyaku hanmi katate dori, followed by shomen uchi in order to refine the timing and direction of a response to an attack. It is Brown Sensei's view that these basic shapes and movements form the foundation of fluid, natural Aikido movements.



We adjourned on Saturday evening to our home where we had dinner, drinks and conversation. The social aspect of these weekends is one of the factors that provide a focus for connection for all the various dojo in South East Queensland (and northern NSW). It is part of the Warwick experience and makes Warwick's isolation a strength because it is the isolation that gives these seminars the atmosphere of a training camp.

Sunday training followed from the pattern of the previous day with more study of morote dori techniques leading into katate dori and ryote dori shiho nage. Training was followed by lunch at Char Bella's (Formerly Elle's) restaurant and then farewell.



David Brown Sensei 6th Dan with Ross Barrell at winter school on the Gold Coast 2007 (Middle)  
Group shot from TTC class at Warwick, August 2011.

# Tasmania's Hanami Geiko a jewel for the mind

by John Rockstrom Sensei



Deloraine is about thirty minute's easy drive from Launceston, with some of the most amazing classical English scenery in Australia. Quamby Bluff towers majestically over Deloraine as you draw nearer. Approaching the township the road bridge crosses the calming, picturesque Meander River and on your left you can see cherry trees in full blossom, weeping willows and a smattering of ducks, geese and water fowl. Partway up the hill from the bridge, in the middle of shops, is a small white doorway with blue lettering stating simply, 'Aikido Dojo'.

The dojo itself is a very old, small converted church that the shops have encompassed and from the outside it's impossible to recognise the church. Inside, only a few of the arched windows remain, now blindly looking out to brick walls. Yet this snug dojo hidden away in a small Tasmanian town is the spiritual heart of aikido in Australia. This is Sugano Dojo.

The first session of Hanami Geiko is held in this dojo with students arriving from Northern Territory, New South Wales and Victoria to join with local students from all over Tasmania. Hanami, or cherry-



blossom viewing, is an age-old tradition in Japan where everyone picnics under the flowering cherry blossom trees and appreciates how beautiful life is, and its transience. The trees look glorious dressed in their flowers. Even as you watch them the petals are falling however, blowing away on the wind. As the poem ends..."Farewell, O Spring! We are on to Eternity".

The intensity of this short moment in time is reflected in the intensity of the training that happens over the Hanami Geiko long weekend. This is not just another series of training sessions but a moment of deep study, close camaraderie and coming to understand the real meaning of the term 'Aikido'. Smibert Shihan explained it as the same sort of feeling Sugano Shihan embodied in his Inner Schools, which are held annually in a Belgium monastery. A small group of like-minded people gather to train, converse and socialise with great concentration and joy.

Part of the sessions were conducted in the traditional, small Deloraine Sugano Dojo and one day was at the ultra-modern blond wood, hugely airy Launceston dojo, which is part of the UTAS, Launceston campus.

During training Smibert Shihan emphasised the importance of being entirely alert and attentive at all times, being receptive as both Uke and Nage. He demonstrated the basic building blocks of standing correctly and moving into a state of readiness through one of Sugano Shihan's last developed sword patterns. He also emphasised the need to do precise, clear-cut techniques saying that good technique can only be found in precision. Anything else creates a vague approximation to the required movement, which then readily fall apart under more intense training.

Botterill Shihan demonstrated his ability to analyse techniques to a detail that left his audience wondering if they really knew anything about these movements at all. He also emphasised the need to thoroughly know the movements, all parts of each movement, and put them together in a single, complete manner. It was a series of lessons in basics that returned us to a new student's mind, and we had to re-evaluate basic techniques we thought we were comfortable performing.

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Sugano Sensei and Weapons Practice

Unfortunately Sugano Sensei is no longer with us. But his legacy lives on with his Aikido Foundation and in the fine instructors we have teaching today. As editor I thought it may be time for a reminder of how dynamic Sugano Sensei was when teaching at National schools, especially in relation to use of weapons. These images were taken at Summer school 2008, and from my memory there was a lot of focus was on training with bokken and Jo. Of course this had become apparent since Sensei's medical problems prevented him from training the way he did in his earlier years. Although the training evolved differently from what it may have been had he not suffered a loss of part of his left leg, it was none the less extremely fulfilling. I personally have found a greater understanding of Aikido from the use of weapons in training and would hope that

Uke for Sugano Sensei left is Andrew Dziejdz Sensei, Above is Wayne Sheills Sensei. The two images below are *junte*. Sensei demonstrated both *junte* and *gyakute* for this application, and both ways are from the Ura side.



Note: the bottom images connected with lines are the same moment with Sensei demonstrating the technique from the other side. Also please note that in the series to the left of the page Sensei is holding the Jo *gyakute*. This I believe relates to the first movement of the 7 step Jo form that we practice and Sensei is clearly demonstrating some of the possibilities inherent in this first movement.



at Summer School 2008

many others would likewise find similar inspiration. I hope to publish a number of series like those on these 2 pages in future issues of Aikido in Australia to remind everyone just how interesting and exciting the use of weapons in Aikido practice can be.

*Please note: I've given my own thoughts about what is happening in these photo sequences and would love it if I could get the Shihan and other senior instructors to give their comments in the future with other similar sequences.*

*John Litchen Editor.*



In these two images Sensei is again using the Jo *gyakute*, with Uke holding the Jo using both hands, while in those to the right and in the top two images the Jo is *junte* with Uke holding with one hand.





Dziedzic Sensei underlined the lack of physical force necessary to apply an aikido technique. Although there appeared to be so much power in a movement it wasn't necessary to employ physical force to create that power, rather; let the relationship of your body moving in time with your partner's body and your internal energy to naturally create the power. He provided many verbal insights to help those in attendance begin to understand the philosophy of the instruction.

Rockstrom Sensei simply emphasised the basics, similar to what his seniors had shown, though it was agreed they were demonstrated with a certain degree of vigour. He also bantered about terms such as 'We-ing' and 'Throwing-up' entirely confounding the student body, but to which they nevertheless nodded politely.

On one evening a sword class incorporating kotodama training was held at dusk in the hills on Tenchi Farm outside Deloraine. Creating the kotodama sounds while moving with another person is quite exhausting! This outstanding area with views towards the valley and Deloraine used for that class is where Bodhi McSweeney and Martin Bratzel plan to build a dojo within the next few years. Following the sword class we were led by Bratzel Sensei through an easy forest trail to a magnificent four hundred year old tree. In the fading light a photo of Sugano Shihan and a piece of his calligraphy was installed in a bole of the tree, transforming the area into a temporary dojo. Each of us had collected an item on the way, such as a

stone or flower or a gum nut, and these were laid as an offering in memory of Sugano Shihan on the ground underneath the photo. We quietly practiced misogi in the forest, darkness dissolving us into shadows.

As usual, the highlight of Hanami Geiko was the picnic under the cherry blossoms by the Meander River on Sunday afternoon following the last session at Deloraine dojo. The day before, the students had gathered at Tenchi Farm to communally prepare large quantities of nori-maki (also known as makizushi); seaweed wrapped rice with fillings, for the rest of us. Everybody sat under the trees in the sunshine drinking freshly warmed sake and scoffing the nori-maki. Bliss!

Hanami Geiko is a special event that every aikidoka in Australia should strive to attend, for your own sake. It provides a depth of insights beyond day-to-day training and forges a level of understanding that we then polish day-to-day, where each of us is but one facet of that understanding. The team in Tasmania who annually put this event together have used all the resources around them to create this jewel for the rest of us to take home.

Kaye Jenkins Sensei assisted by Marion Artis are the main organisers of the event but would readily agree they cannot do it without the unstinting support of members from Deloraine, Launceston and Devonport dojos. While there are hotels in Deloraine a highlight is to stay at Tenchi Farm, make sure you book early for next year!



The calligraphy says Sugano Dojo, and was painted by Sugano Sensei when he visited Tasmania and officially gave his name to the dojo. The Sugano Dojo in Deloraine is the only dojo that has been given the name and can be considered a dojo for all of Sensei's students anywhere in Australia.



seen on the web...

Today I spent several hours in the company of some really nice people; all serious budoka and dedicated to their chosen art: Aikido. The cherry blossom trees along the river bank just outside the dojo are in full bloom this time of year, and after four days of hard training it is a relief for everyone to relax under a canopy of sakura, eat lots of sushi, and consume generous amounts of warm saki, and cold beer. I was there to catch up with old friends, and do a little magazine work at the same time.

I have to say, I never come away from my aikido friends without feeling a little regret. I regret that it's so hard to find karate people these days with the same enthusiasm for their training. I regret that the level of respect shown to each other in aikido is now quite rare in karate. And I regret that many of those teaching karate feel they have a right to make money, while all the sensei I know in aikido teach free of charge.

Many years ago I had quite a low opinion of aikido, but not since I felt the grip of the late Seiichi Sugano sensei of the New York Aikikai. If ever I thought aikido was for wimps, I had my thinking drastically altered that day.

Mike Clark Sensei Shinseidokan Karate Dojo.



**Front row seated:** Bob Botterill Shihan, Tony Smibert Shihan, John Rockstrom Sensei, Andrew Dziedzic Sensei, Annalise Bennett, Julie Boydell. **2nd row seated:** Andrew Ross Sensei, Peter Henley, Kaye Jenkins Sensei, Mike Seward, Kayoko Higashiwatoko, **Back row standing:** Gaye Webb, Linton Tuleja, Rachelle Telson, Marion Artis, Martin Bratzel Sensei, Cathy Farrer, Jacquie Mercer, Joshua Tshony, Zac Mead, Lance Wilson, Chris Jones, Geoff Dugan, Nick Blackburn, Dina Lee and Emma.





Official Group photo by Justin Cogley

Closing moments : presentation of gifts by Felicity Peters. *Photos by Yusuf Iqbal*

**Dan promotions winter school 2011**

**Shodan:**

- Paul Parrish (NSW)
- Michael Smith (NSW)
- Max Tan (ACT)

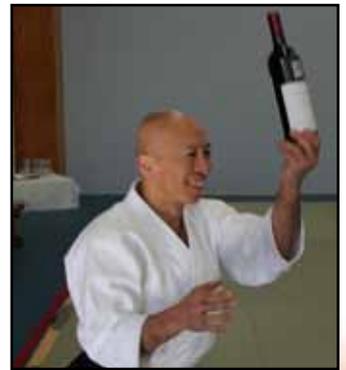
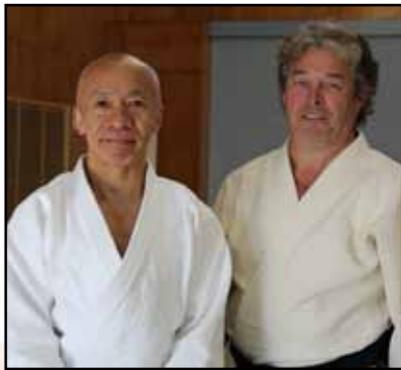
**Nidan:**

- Daniel Balaban (NSW/ACT)
- Justin Cogley (NSW)
- Patrick Connor (NSW)
- Michael Holm (NSW)
- Dominic Lane (NSW)
- David Robinson (QLD)

**Sandan:**

- David Bell (Vic)
- Norman Rowe (Vic)
- Colin Saville (Vic)





**Summer school 2012  
Special Guest Instructor  
Harvey Konigsberg Shihan**

One of the original students of Yoshimitsu Yamada Shihan... Konigsberg Shihan was also a close friend of Sugano Shihan and has been practicing Aikido for over 45 years. In addition to teaching at Woodstock, he also instructs at the New York Aikikai in Manhattan.



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