

# *Aikido in Australia*

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

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*...moments to remember...*

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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 note: I think it is important that the quotes below from the introduction to the Instructor's course at the recent National Summer School should be kept in mind by all students and instructors throughout Aiki Kai Australia.*

If Aikido is in fact *an evolving idea held together by core elements* then instructors must maintain these in order to pass it on to others.

Our Instructors within the system inherit a great deal from the past, along with opportunity to contribute a great deal to the future. The maturity we now have as an organisation is something only dreamed of in the 60s and 70s, but slowly built over 50 years. It is also now at a point of transition with the passing of the earlier generation and the emergence of new generations. We benefit from the contribution of high ranking seniors who have matured through a lifetime of training. We have a middle generation deeply engaged in their own Aikido journey, and we have younger people who may be looking forward to training for the rest of their lives.

Sugano Sensei described Aikido as: *A way to cultivate a human being*, evolving a complete person who would be an individual, actively pursuing the principles of Aikido through regular training. Sugano Sensei himself was an good example of the type of unique people who occur in Aikido.

When asked, Sugano Sensei often described Aikido as *'a big question mark'* – meaning that it is not strictly defined. It remains for each person to discover according to their own realization.

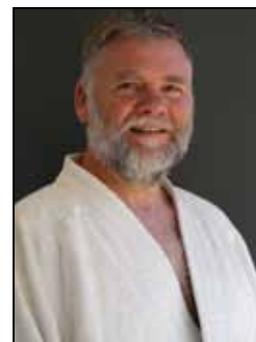
The way he taught, and indeed his own life-journey illustrate the importance of *constant study* and of personal *evolution through training*.

Tony Smibert.

*Editorial Comment: From time to time we need to reflect on what we have learnt and to think about how we have integrated that learning into our core body movement and understanding of Aikido. To that end I have selected some photos taken during Sensei's 2006 and 2007 national schools in the hope that they will help us to remember Sensei and to inspire us to re-focus on what we are studying so we can continue to evolve as students of Aikido...*

*Thus this issue is subtitled ...moments to remember...*

*The editor welcomes David Scott Sensei's contribution for this issue and recommends everyone read it. There are interesting parallels here that have much relevance to us as we study Aikido. see page 5.*



## Tony Smibert Shihan in Middelkerke, Belgium (June 2011) Another View by Robin Wilton

*An Englishman, a Welshman, an Australian and a Frenchwoman get onto a cross-channel ferry...*

Not the set-up line of a joke, in this case, but the car-load which set off from our Wiltshire dojo, bound for Tony Smibert Shihan's seminar at Middelkerke on the Belgian coast. With me were Bob Hill sensei, and fellow students Peter Evans and Chantal McGill. It wasn't our first aikido trip across the channel, by any means. Because of Bob's strong lineage to the late Sugano Shihan, it's always been an assumption that members of our dojo would take the opportunity to train with Sugano Shihan as a pre-requisite for a shodan grading. So, whether for Inner Aikido Seminars in Belgium and Holland or weekend sessions in Brussels, we've always tried to make the trip. As ever, aikido makes for strong bonds, and it's always good to meet up again with our friends in the Dutch and Belgian aikido communities.

The novelty this time was that (apart from Bob) the rest of our group had never trained with sensei Tony, so there was a degree of anticipation to see what he was like on the tatami. I have to confess to some nervousness at the time: what if the Belgians didn't take to him? What if we couldn't do what he expected us to? Would he, bluntly, be any good?

Of course, such worries were completely unfounded. Tony sensei was calm, assured and engaging from the start. The familiar warm-up routine eased us into things, the butterflies evaporated... and so it began. I soon noticed that, like Sugano Shihan, Tony sensei has the ability to start from the simplest things and develop them into clear teaching of complex and advanced practice. Just as Sugano Shihan might open a seminar by explaining that "in aikido, there are only three ways of standing: normal, lowered, and hanmi", so Tony sensei began with a deceptively simple movement: stepping forward into hanmi, advance your leading hand purposefully. And like Sugano Shihan, Tony sensei used this as a recurring motif to link together solo, paired and group training, from static to dynamic practice.

Thus, by the end of the first morning session we had gone from this simple hanmi movement to several forms of kaeshi waza in response to irimi nage. Tony sensei qualified the kaeshi waza with the following comment: "*It's no good letting someone put irimi nage on you and hoping you'll be able to counter with one of these – if they do it properly, you won't get that opportunity*".

Rather, the kaeshi waza were used to show how one might exploit flaws in a loosely-executed irimi nage – so we could refine our own irimi nage and minimise those flaws.

I think Sugano Shihan's influence was also clear in the way Tony sensei used weapons work — again, following the principle that simple elements can be built up into increasingly advanced practice. For instance, we went through the following progression:

**Tandoku doza:** — kiri tsuke, kiri sage, nidan giri

**So tai doza:** — ichi no ken ('static'), ichi no ken ('dynamic' – i.e. with both partners exploiting movement and maai.)

Similarly, with the jo "seven movements", there was a progression from static practice (perhaps just within the space of one tatami) to more dynamic practice, with movement back and forth as well as turning.

Weapons work was also an opportunity to focus on precision:

*"When you're using a sword, there's no going back to correct mistakes"*



At one point Tony sensei was fairly explicit about the basic framework of a typical training session:

**Preparation of the mind**

**Preparation of the body**

**Co-ordination of mind and body**

**Basic techniques (paired)**

**Advanced/dynamic practice**

That framework is probably familiar to most of us, even if we've never been conscious of it explicitly. As things turned out, for various reasons I had the chance to take some photos and video clips of much of the training – something I never managed to do with Sugano Shihan's seminars. I understand he wasn't a huge fan of "reference" videos of aikido anyway, believing that aikido is about evolution, change and development, not just replication. That said, here's what I took away from Middelkerke: a technique, a lesson framework, a video... these aren't meant to be stencils that you can use to make copy after identical copy, as long as you stay inside the lines. Rather, they are points of reference which you can use to orient yourself, even when your practice evolves and takes you in different directions. A good teacher doesn't just put things into your head: they also give you the confidence to develop further. I got that from Sugano

Shihan, and I certainly got it from Smibert Shihan in Middelkerke... Tony, many thanks...

As for the punch-line to the one about the Englishman, the Welshman, the Australian and the Frenchwoman, well... the reason I spent most of the seminar learning the meaning of the term "mitori keiko" was that, on Day One, I did something rather rash and tore a calf muscle. At my age, I ought to know better. By the evening I was reduced to a strange crab-like shuffle which confined me to our shared apartment while my fellow aikidoka went out for a beer. There was already a running joke going, comparing me to Julie Walters' decrepit waitress in the "Two Soups" sketch (readily available on YouTube if you haven't seen it).

So, when the apartment doorbell rang, I assumed it was Peter and Chantal coming back for something they'd forgotten. Accordingly, I scuttled sideways up the stairs, whipped the door smartly open and said "Two soups???" This somewhat confused Smibert Shihan, Louis van Thieghem sensei, Bob Hill sensei, and Alain Dujardin sensei, who were standing on the doorstep. Fortunately they are all far too well-mannered to bat an eyelid at this kind of eccentricity, so, letting them in, I hobbled back down the stairs again to find out why I had 22 Dan's-worth of aikido luminaries paying me house-calls.

To my great delight and honour, I found that it was to let me know that Hombu dojo had confirmed the shodan grading I had taken the previous year. The grading was supervised by Louis van Thieghem sensei and Bob Hill sensei at Sugano Shihan's request, and as far as I am aware, mine was the last Yudansha registration to be made under his name. That privilege only deepens my sense of gratitude to Sugano Shihan, not just for the direct instruction I got from him, but also for the depth of the teaching legacy he built on our behalf.

My torn calf is fully recovered, by the way, so these days I only scuttle sideways if I feel like it. Any time you can follow Tony sensei up to Belgium, we'd all be delighted to see you. The aikido should be just as you would expect. Admittedly, the English Channel coast may not lend itself to surfing or barbecues, but the company's good... and Belgian beer takes some beating, too. *Robin Wilton, Trowbridge Aikikai*



*Sugano Sensei... Kata Men-uchi Shihonage*



*Gyaku Hanmi  
Katatetori Kokyunage...*



## **AIKIDO AND FARMING ARE ONE** *by David Scott Sensei, 6th Dan*



As I am sure many of my old friends in Aikido know, some forty years ago I started writing a book about Sugano Sensei's Aikido. At first I collaborated with Sensei and we were going to do it together. However, Sensei became increasingly concerned that a book might convey the idea that his Aikido was fixed and he lost interest in the project. Sensei's Aikido was always evolving. He said it is the nature of a book to be seen as fixed. So it is with this caution in mind that I continued to write. Although Sensei made many jokes and disparaging comments publicly over the years about my habit of always taking notes, he was nevertheless privately encouraging of my efforts to write my own book. It is now a monster, some 500 pages of text. Unfortunately very little of it has seen the light of day. On a recent trip to Tasmania I was persuaded by a long standing friend to put some of the material into our newsletter. Here is the first installment. It is just a small section recently written that was destined perhaps for only an appendix. I hope you enjoy it.

David.

### **Aikido and Farming are One!**

O Sensei essentially asserted that "Aikido and Farming are One" – "Heino – Ichinyo" [Actually - Fighting and Farming are One, \* Ueshiba K. 2008 p. 228]

Although I did work for a short time with Saito Sensei at Iwama and helped to maintain the property and perhaps then had something of an ideal opportunity to contemplate what this assertion might have meant to O Sensei, I had no idea of the depth of this affirmation until I recently inherited responsibility for a garden and took advice on the matter from my friend and Gardener Austin James.

Upon reflection there are many parallels between Gardening and Aikido – cultivating things in the soil in one and cultivating human beings in the other. In cultivating a garden however we are also cultivating ourselves in much the same way we do as either Instructor or Student on the Aikido mat.

I can of course only speculate upon what O Sensei may have meant by his affirmation but I have found it interesting to make this inquiry. It has also helped me meet my obligations to manage the garden I have inherited. Surprisingly I have grown to love it in a very short space of time.

Aikido and Gardening are not natural ways of being in the world. Some who prefer to think of Aikido as embodying natural movement may balk at this. The Gardener often (perhaps always) seeks to cultivate things where they normally would not grow. The Aikidoka seeks to cultivate movement that flies in the face of their natural reactive or habitual ways of moving. We need to inhibit our natural reactive responses and move in accordance with our training when practicing and also when dealing with confrontations we might encounter off the mat. Aikido training could be viewed as an opportunity to cultivate this particular non reactive way of being in the world.

Gardening is best approached mindfully. Not as a chore or something that needs to be done quickly and in order to get goals accomplished. It is best to simply be in the garden and to be gardening when gardening not trying to get things over and done with so that you can get on with something else. A garden is a place with spirit that cultivates an inner resonance usually of serenity but also of the rhythms of life and death. I believe that being in someone's garden enables us to connect to the spirit of the gardener and their intention in cultivating their particular garden.

A garden needs to be considered in relation to what is needed for life – water, shade, sunlight, space, time, etc. You have to develop a sense of what is required and plan for it. In both Gardening and Aikido we need to find the way to enhance the growth that we desire and avoid ways that inhibit it. A Garden and an Aikido lesson both have a direction and this is set by the Gardener promoting effectiveness and

.....continued from previous page.

efficiency by aligning their efforts as much as is possible to be in harmony with what happens in nature.

A gardener has to consider their position in relation to the garden and develop a sense of how they fit in as a part of the whole. A garden is in fact dependent upon there being a gardener. And being a Gardener is to have responsibility and obligation. And to be a Gardener is to be on a path without an end. So it is also with Aikido.

The Gardener just like the Aikidoka needs to be attentive and “watch carefully”. The Gardener needs to pay attention to the cycles of nature, look closely and notice what is happening in the garden – what stands out? What is missing? A curled leaf, a bug, the presence of sunlight, shade, water, something nibbled at, weeds, the trail of a snail, and so on.

You have to also watch what happens when you do things. And you need to know the right time to do them. How does the soil react when you put water onto it? What can you do to get the soil to respond the way you want for the plant you are cultivating?

In a garden we are also looking for a balance – too much water or not enough - each can be detrimental depending upon the plant, the soil and the conditions. We are trying when gardening to fit in as best as possible with what will naturally happen in the environment of the garden so we can utilize this as much as possible.

This also results in some efficiency in the management of the garden and reduces the effort required to maintain it. So we are seeking to reduce our impact on nature as much as possible and to allow what naturally happens (eg use the natural predators) to work for us in maintaining the garden.

A garden needs to be felt – you have to get your hands dirty. You have to put your hand into the soil to see if it needs water. You have to be in physical contact with the Garden. You have to engage in the practice. Gardening like Aikido can not simply be learnt from reading a book.

Distance (spacing) is important in gardening. The plants have to be certain distances apart to allow for the sunlight and the passage of air. If you plant too close for example you risk cross infestation when pests become too prolific.

While we may grow some plants for “Grug” \*\* we don't want a proliferation of Grugs to take over the garden and destroy it. We seek to ‘reduce’ not ‘remove’ all of the pests. Similarly we seek to reduce weeds but not eliminate them as they have a contribution to make to the overall micro climate of the garden. It is preferable not to poison insects or set baits as it is likely others might suffer and this will have consequences for the Garden.

Timing is obviously important in that we need to be responsive to the cycles of nature to know the correct time to plant certain things given the nature of our particular garden environment. We also need to know when to water, when to add nutrients, when to prune, when to pick, and so on. And of course there is little more rewarding than enjoying the flowers and eating the fresh produce out of the garden you have cultivated.

And so it is that actually and metaphorically Aikido and Gardening (Farming) are one. Essential to both are awareness, attentiveness, being in the moment, mindfulness, and distance, and timing, being responsive to what happens, fitting in with what is occurring, appreciating your place, efficiency, acting in ways that facilitate growth and promote tolerance and compassion.

Happy Gardening!

\* Ueshiba K. A Life in Aikido: The Biography of Founder Morihei Ueshiba Kodansha International Tokyo 2008, p 228

\*\* A reference to Prior Ted “Grug and His Garden”, Hodder and Stoughton, 1979.

## My life as a Budoka by Hubert Eerdekens

Every year the Flemish Aikido Federation (Belgium North) organizes a seminar at the Belgian sea side. It always takes place during the extended weekend of Ascension. Since it is a major event it gathers many Aikido practitioners from all over the country, most of them accompanied by their family.

It was there that I had the privilege of meeting Tony Smibert Shihan. During one of our breakfast conversations, he asked me if I could write a short resume about my life as a Budoka. I was surprised but felt much honored and promised to do so.

My life as a Budoka started when I was a ten year old schoolboy, some 56 years ago. Thanks to the initiative of the local municipality in Antwerp, schoolchildren were given the chance to participate at sport activities. I began with the practice of Judo. I still remember the impression the dojo made on me when I entered it for the first time in my life. Judo training made me very happy and I trained diligently two times a week.

Two years later something important happened. Besides Judo, I also liked very much to read the adventures of a former French squadron leader named Bob Morane. In one of his adventures he traveled to China in search of “The Forbidden City” ruled by a mysterious person named the Mask of Jade. After some quite dramatic events and at the moment Bob Morane was about to discover “The Forbidden City” and its secrets the Mask forestalled his plans and challenged him to a fight to the finish. Taken prisoner Morane had no choice but to accept the challenge, the more so as he was confident in his Judo, Jujutsu and boxing skills. The small masked man did not seem to have any chance at all. Much to his surprise - and mine - the fight ended in failure for my hero. He was severely beaten and defeated.

Asked about the cause of his defeat The Mask of Jade told him he had just been fighting with an expert in Karate.

This was the first time in my life I read something about Karate and I was very impressed. The desire to learn this martial art grew in me. I looked for a Karate dojo and a few months later, thanks to a friend, I found one. I stopped Judo practice and started with the study of Karate. This study ended after 30 years of training when I was 42 years old, due to physical injuries and wear. During those 30 years I witnessed the evolution of a practically unknown martial art, at least in Belgium, to a very popular one and in the growth and expansion of which I actively participated.

To compensate the loss of intense physical activity I did a lot of swimming and hatha yoga. But seven years later, at the age of 49, I started with the study of Aikido.

Aikido was not unfamiliar to me. I heard about Aikido for the first time in the early 1960's, when two family members told me about their Aikido practice in Antwerp. Classes were lead by Murashige Sensei, who was sent by O'Sensei to Belgium. Unfortunately, Murashige Sensei died a few years later in a car accident, which abruptly ended Aikido expansion, at least in the Northern part of the country.

Later, thanks to my friends, I saw several times Noro Sensei in Brussels, whose classes delighted me.

My acquaintance with Aikido is also rooted in my friendship with one of my former Karate students. Due to severe knee problems he also had to stop Karate practice a long time ago and decided to switch definitely to Aikido. This gentleman is now a high ranked Aikido teacher whose classes I attend when seminars are organized.

From the beginning of my Aikido study, almost 17 years ago, I had the great privilege of receiving the teachings of Sugano Shihan and was able to follow him until he passed away. It is a great loss for all of us and at the same time a great example of perseverance for which we must be grateful.

I am now 66 years old and still practicing with great enthusiasm and confident in the future. My personal modest contribution is to try to spread Aikido among seniors and to share with them the joy I have in practicing Aikido.

*Hubert is a student of Alain Dujardin in Belgium. He has trained for 60 years in Martial Arts. And as we build our friendship with Belgium our 3 Shihans were invited to visit and they were most impressed by Hubert's dedication and sincerity and asked if he would write something about his life and Aikido. The above is his contribution to this newsletter... JL, Editor.*

## We Are Just a Link in a Chain by John Rockstrom 6th Dan



**Many years ago**, too many to contemplate, I was an extremely keen young student training martial ways in Japan. For some reason studying martial ways seemed to fit my personality, it struck a chord that vibrates just as strongly today. Back then it was judo, kendo and traditional jujutsu, aikido came along a little later.

As always with young people, my only thought was what I could get out of training, what would it do for me? I never saw myself as more than just a student — but I always wanted to be very good at ‘it’ — it being martial ways. So I studied as hard as I could and trained harder than I could imagine.

My instructors were very harsh and unrelenting, from the very outset I was primed to fire off on command and never give in. This creates a very selfish person, one whose only interest is how well they are going. Training partners are slabs of meat for pulping, sooner and harder the better.

On one occasion, just before I left Japan, I threw my training partner so hard he had to go to hospital as I’d ruptured his spleen. When I visited him in hospital he proudly showed me his operation scar which ran from below his navel to his sternum. I surveyed my handiwork with some satisfaction and everyone congratulated me on what a good throw it had been!

So I continued to train in this vein in Japan and Korea, to do my best to be the best and to meet my goals. This was all to do with the sport aspect of judo primarily and to a lesser kendo. These forms were all about winning and losing, and losing wasn’t an option my instructors left me.

Strangely enough it was one of my judo instructors who gave me my first clear insight into the core of martial training. Nakano Sensei was 7th Dan judo and also was the headmaster of a traditional jujutsu school. Jujutsu was still banned from being openly

taught in Japan, the ban was instigated in the late 1880s, as many instructors were so unskilled at that time they were killing their students. Nakano Sensei had studied jujutsu in secret alongside judo as a young man and had a fearsome reputation as a policeman, but that is another story.

Nakano’s students trained judo during the week and a select few were invited to train jujutsu at special class on Sundays. It was an open secret in the area that Nakano was teaching jujutsu but as his reputation was so high no one ever intervened. One day during a particularly hard session Nakano Sensei stood in front of me and asked me why did I think he was taking the trouble to train me? In my self-centered way I replied it was to make me better!

‘*Bab!*’ he replied, ‘*You are just a link in the chain!*’ I train you so that you may pass it on to others: Just as my teachers trained me.’ He outlined a bewildering list of the lineage of the school and all the people over the centuries who had created and perfected the techniques he was now showing to me.

An instructor in Korea had made a similar comment but I hadn’t registered it at the time but it now came back to me. This moment changed my attitude to martial training entirely, I stopped seeing it as a win or lose situation but a method of connecting the past with the future and I was but one conduit entrusted to do it. I think this wrecked my judo career; I continued to train but lost the killer instinct. Some people may disagree with that viewpoint and I know even today I have to keep my competitive nature in check if I’m to truly understand the nature of the movements.

Sugano Sensei often said the same thing in his regular class about how we were continuing a long tradition, but we followed the singular example of O Sensei as our prime guide. He followed O Sensei’s teaching as closely as he could, which he passed on to us like a gift so we, in turn, could pass the gift to the next person following behind us, so they could pass it on.

Most of us start training for personal motivation reasons, what can we get out of it. As you train think more of yourself as receiving a parcel that you have to give to someone else. Make sure the parcel is as pristine as when you received it. Don’t let it get raggedy and untidy and pass on a jumbled mess. You are an important link in a very long chain; take care of yourself and the gift. If someone has taken the time and trouble to pass it to you, you are now expected to pass it on to the next person...



## Back to Basics by John Litchen 4th Dan



For too long too many of us who have an instructing role have tended to focus on more and more techniques, or technical applications, to the detriment of basic movement and simple applications to attacks. Also the focus has been on an individual finishing technique rather than principles that can lead to a variety of possible finishing techniques.

Why have we been doing this? Is it because we become bored with doing very basic things? Or is it that we think the students will become bored if we don't go beyond demonstrating something basic and start showing more advanced things? A question we should be asking is: Are these advanced things really more advanced, or is it that they are simply more complicated? And if that is the case — complicated rather than advanced — then why are we doing them? Perhaps it is for ourselves rather than for the students we are instructing.

I remember Sugano Sensei saying often enough that if you focus on technique you will become very good at technique, but you may not necessarily be doing Aikido. Aikido is more than simply being good at doing techniques. What exactly did he mean by that? I think it is something we need to consider very carefully as we progress both as students and as instructors.

As instructors we should be able to make even the most basic movement such as *Tai no henka* interesting and challenging for all students to practice, not just for beginners. We should be able to explain, if they require explanation other than demonstrating, the importance of this movement and why it is a fundamental exercise.

There is a story that I have referred to before about O Sensei demonstrating during a class where he had newspaper journalists and photographers observing... and one of these reporters asked him what was the ultimate technique in Aikido, or what was the secret to Aikido (something like that), and his answer was to take his Uke who was a very young Chiba Sensei and demonstrate *gyaku hanmi katatetori tai no henka*. "That's it?" the reporter asked. "Yes, that's it," O Sensei replied with an enigmatic smile, leaving them bewildered. There was no throwing students around, no smashing them into the tatami, no *Katame waza*, just *Tai no henka*.\*

That is something we should consider. And while doing that we should also consider why Sugano Sensei always had us do this (usually) combined with *kokyubo* at the beginning of every national school. He considered it so important that we often spent 30 minutes doing it.



*Sugano Shihan with Smibert Shihan  
in Melbourne 2006 and on the Gold  
Coast 2007*

*photos on these pages by  
John Litchen.*

How often, if at all do we do this in a normal class? I understand there are time constraints because a class is usually no more than 90 minutes, whereas at a national school there are many hours of training so time is not a problem, but do we do it long enough, or do we do it always, or only sometimes? And when we do it do we rush through it as if it was something to get out of the way before the serious stuff begins?

O Sensei believed this was the most important exercise if not the ultimate exercise in Aikido. We should honour that and consider *Tai no henka* as important as anything else we do. Better yet, we should consider it to be the most fundamental movement with a partner that we can practice, and that from this all other techniques we may want to practice will evolve.

*Tai no henka* involves being aware of the other person's energy, harmonising with the other person's forward movement, creating irimi while shifting off line to allow enough space for Uke to pass without impacting into Nage, making *kaiten* —which specifically means *body turn*— and which ultimately finishes as a *tenkan* step while Uke passes, and then extending forward so Uke while still hanging on is taken off balance to the point where recovery is not possible. After this we can add *kokyubo* or *kokyunage* in various ways, or we can open Uke up to *Ikkyo*, *Nikyo*, *Sankyo*, *Yonkyo*, *Kaiten nage*, *Iriminage*, *kotegaeshi*... whatever you may wish to do; it's all there right from this one basic fundamental exercise.

No wonder Sugano Sensei practiced it so much at national schools...

No wonder why O Sensei considered it to be the ultimate technique in Aikido...

If we really think about it, and spend time examining the implications of *Tai no henka* rather than rushing through it to get it out of the way at the beginning of a class, we may perhaps come to a similar conclusion.



Dave Robinson with Yusuke Komiya  
Debbie Noble with Grasham Morriss Sensei



Smibert Shihan with Uke Linda Godfrey  
Below: Training at Summer School with Botterill Shihan



I have written about Tai no henka before. It can be found in the Newsletter Volume 2 #5, available as a downloadable pdf file on the Aiki Kai Australia national website.

\* (Reference: see page232, *Invincible Warrior*, by John Stevens.  
There is a beautiful photo of O Sensei with Chiba sensei as his Uke.)



## Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation

by Andrew Dziedzic, 6th Dan,  
National Area Representative



All students who join Aiki Kai Australia simultaneously register as students of Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation, a process that may initially appear quite puzzling to new members. So in order to better explain why this occurs, it's necessary to understand a little of our history. I refer to our organisation as a School, although technically we are all also members of an incorporated association, Aiki Kai Australia. In fact, it is everyone's registration as a student of the Foundation which actually better defines who we are and what we do: we are all students of Aikido.

Some ten years after Sugano Sensei arrived in Australia in 1965, the organisation that later became Aiki Kai Australia was founded in order to assist him in his task of the dissemination of Aikido throughout Australia. In doing so, he appointed Area Representatives in each state and territory to act as his personal representatives, and national office holders were appointed to provide the administrative framework for a growing national organisation.

After Sugano Sensei's departure to live overseas in 1978, he remained our teacher and mentor, conducting our twice yearly national schools and all our dan gradings, as well as travelling all over Australia in order to teach. In his absence between visits we all sought to follow his direction. Aiki Kai Australia's main purpose was to provide the administrative machinery to facilitate Sensei's task as our teacher and Mentor, and to assist the most senior students to carry their responsibility for him whilst he was absent.

So what did Sugano Sensei contribute to our organisation, and how did this lead to the setting up of his Foundation? Of course Sugano Sensei contributed a direct connection with the Aikido of the Founder, O Sensei. It was this source of inspiration together with the fruits of his own considerable study - which he shared with us - which have really been the font and great inspiration for our Aikido. Sugano Sensei had an international reputation as one of the truly great teachers who had been an *uchi deshi* (live-in student) of O Sensei, and the standing he built up internationally always gave us credibility and standing on the international stage. His 45 years of teaching provided us with a model, not only technically, but also instructionally and ethically, for us to follow. Sugano Sensei also opened the door to a deeper and wider conception of the nature of Aikido than we could have ever anticipated, and changed the lives of many.

Secondly Sugano Sensei was the principal link between Aiki Kai Australia and initially, the Founder, and then later the second and third Doshu, as well as with Hombu (Headquarters) Dojo. He advocated for us and acted as our principal spokesman in our dealings with Hombu Dojo in Japan, and played the key role with respect to our policy in the International Aikido Federation.

As Sugano Sensei was reaching the latter part of his life, the Aikido Foundation was set up in order to make provision for his care and welfare, but also as the body into which he vested his personal authority, to provide for a smooth transition of authority on his passing. (The Foundation fulfilled those functions admirably: for example, it was able to ensure that in the last months of his life, Sensei had the best level of care possible.) In his will, Sensei made provision for the setting up of a trust within the Foundation - which was set up to perpetuate his Aikido legacy in Australia on his passing. The trustees were 3 of the most senior teachers in Australia, Tony Smibert Shihan, Robert Botterill Shihan and Hanan Janiv Shihan, the 3 senior members of the Technical and Teaching Committee. These 3 trustees play a key role of the perpetuation of his Aikido legacy, along with the

beneficiaries of that trust, the most senior teachers ranked 5<sup>th</sup> dan or higher; all these people share the main responsibility for carrying that legacy into the future.

Of course, all of us are registered as students of the Foundation, since the Trustees themselves continue their studentship, along with everyone else, following Sugano Sensei's example of life-long study of Aikido - as inspired by his example. In the case of the Trustees and senior teachers, everyone can see the results of their studies in their classes at the national schools.

So what does the Foundation actually do? It looks to the past so that we can appreciate and understand the depth and richness of our heritage; it looks after the present by overseeing the teaching and direction for instruction, especially at National Schools and TTC weekends; it looks to the future by initiatives to encourage and develop newer students, and by looking to identify and develop the teachers of tomorrow.

By asking Jikou Sugano, Sugano Sensei's son, to act as the Curator of an online library which will act as a repository for the worldwide collection of film footage of Sugano Sensei, the Foundation is preserving our heritage. This will make footage of Sugano Sensei's teaching available online to all who wish to undertake further study.

Most importantly, the Foundation is the repository of hundreds of years of Aikido experience - experience which the senior members of the Foundation share freely. At the most senior level, the most senior teachers trained "one on one" with Sugano Sensei in the dojo for many years. It is this sort of foundation which, together with the dedicated study and experience of their own, gives these senior people the ability to guide and develop Aikido into the future in Australia.

By awarding two bursaries to two up and coming kyu grades to facilitate their attendance at Winter School, the Foundation is looking to the future, by providing an opportunity for study that these students might not have otherwise had. In addition, the Foundation is providing funds for the making of a professional quality documentary about Sugano Sensei, Aiki Kai Australia and the future for Aikido in Australia. This will not only illuminate and honour our past, but it will hopefully encourage us all to look optimistically towards the future of Aikido in Australia - as well as being a powerful promotional tool.

Unexpectedly, the Foundation has also taken on an international role. Soon after Sugano Sensei's death, several of the most senior students of Sugano Sensei from around the world contacted Tony Smibert Shihan, seeking guidance and help in relation to Sugano Sensei's teaching. As a result the 3 Trustees have now been teaching at Aikido Schools all over the world at which Sugano Sensei used to teach, having been invited by those groups who regarded Sugano Sensei as their teacher. In return we have also benefited from visits from the most senior of the overseas teachers who followed Sugano Sensei. For example, we have virtually adopted Louis van Thieghem Shihan as one of our own - now a regular guest and teacher at our national schools.

So there you have it, a few examples of how the Foundation is preserving our proud heritage, caring for our evolving present, and looking to provide for our exciting future. So the Foundation is at the heart of our School - perhaps you could even call it the heart - but then again, it's all of us putting all our hearts into our Aikido, trying to live up to the example which Sugano Sensei provided, which makes us the unique School we have become.

## Promoting Aikido in Warwick by Ross Barrell and Kathy McCarthy

Warwick Aikido club is envied by many Aikido students throughout Australia because we are one of very few clubs who own their own training facility. This means that we have permanent infrastructure, we don't need to lift and lay the mats every time we train and we're not subject to ever rising rents. However, the down side of this scenario is that we have to pay for ongoing maintenance, rates, power, water and insurance. And of course, we have to mow our own grass.

For many years the Warwick Aikido club has run at a small loss with the support of a small handful of Aikido students. Late in 2011, Rohan Fett, one of our senior kyu grades, suggested we take advantage of a state government initiative and apply for a grant to support Community Inclusion through the department of Communities (Sport and Recreation). The Department of Communities website (<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/sportrec/funding/overview-of-all-funding-programs/closed-on-hold/active-inclusion-program>) states that this grant provides funding "for activities that encourage greater participation, education and training, and volunteer development and recruitment to increase access to sport and active recreation by the community." We applied for the grant and, to our surprise and delight, received approximately \$5000 worth of funding. The grant will support some advertising, some come and try days, training for First Aid certification for three of our members and support for volunteer development and recruitment.

As part of our promotional effort, a few weeks ago we filled a large display window at the local shopping centre with Aikido paraphernalia, action photos kindly supplied by John Litchen Sensei, some books, copies of the Aikido Australia newsletter and a sprinkling of pithy sayings from O'Sensei. The display was eye catching and proved to be of unusual interest to local people at least partly because it was not the usual sort of display put up by the local Quilters club, Artists group or show society.

At the end of the week (Saturday) we had a stand outside

the BiLo supermarket with video clips, more pictures, flyers and other promotional stuff. All this was followed by a Sunday demonstration and come-and-try-day. This effort was supported by an "advertorial" in the local newspaper and an ad promoting a demonstration and come and try day which would immediately follow the display and promotional stand.

Any Aikido group planning to attempt public demonstrations of this sort need to liaise with Andrew Dziejcz Sensei in plenty of time so that public liability insurance cover can be appropriately arranged. People who choose to try Aikido for a short half hour lesson also need to fill in an application for an interim membership and permission from the Area rep needs to be obtained to waive the fee for what is effectively a 1 day trial membership with Aiki Kai Australia. We informed the people participating in the come and try event that we would consider that the requirement to watch a class before beginning training would be fulfilled by their participation on the day.

We had no idea how many people would be attracted to an event such as this, so we were again delighted when about thirty people showed up for the demonstration and eleven of these got on the mat to try out a few movements and some basic techniques. Since that day two people have started training with our "beginner's package" which offers ten lessons and a 3 month interim Aiki Kai membership for \$70. We are expecting that, in time, we will see a few more people start their training as a result of this promotion.

As a follow-up, we plan to continue to advertise in the local newspaper on a fortnightly basis, at least until the budget runs out. We have plans to liaise with local Secondary schools with a view to promoting Aikido in their school newsletters and on sporting notice boards and will repeat the large display window, demonstration and come-and-try day combination later in the year. By the end of the year, with any luck we will have succeeded in raising the profile of Aikido in Warwick and will have at least doubled our membership.



# SUWARI WAZA KOKYU RIYOKU YO SEI HO

(More commonly called *kokyu ho* , or *kokyu dosa*)

by Shihan Sugano

*Kokyu ho* is a method to develop *kokyu riyoku* ; which literally translates to mean "power of breath" (*kokyu*=breath, *riyoku*=strength).

Aikido requires co-ordination of the body and extra focus. Traditionally this is called *ki*, *kokyu*, or *kokyu riyoku*.



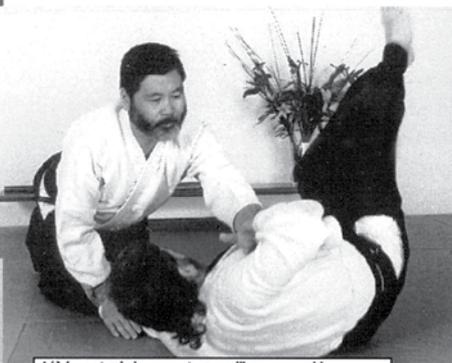
1/ At the moment of contact, your arm is extended with your focus on your hand. The finger direction is upward at about 40 degrees.



2/ Start to use your upper body.



3/ As you lean towards your partner, one hand cuts down to one side.



4/ Your training partner will respond by falling backwards.



5/ Now your knee moves forward to follow up, and you pin your partner. Continually focus on your hand, extending your arm to pin your partner.

*These images are extracted from the Aikido Australia Newsletter, Autumn - Winter 1997. Uke for Sugano Shihan was David Scott Sensei.*

*This page has been scanned and reproduced here for those students who are reasonably new and who may never have seen earlier copies of the newsletter. The text accompanying these photos is by Sugano Shihan, but transcribed by Smibert Shihan. Editor*

## IMPRINT EXERCISE

When standing in *toko tachi* and doing the 'imprint' exercise — rising up on your toes while breathing in, and then settling back onto your heels, and squeezing the fists while breathing out — try to remember your origin. You may think that you have forgotten what it felt like to stand upright for the first time, but your body remembers. O Sensei described *toko tachi* (natural posture) as standing between 'Heaven and Earth', which are then connected through us. (He said that universal energy flowed through the body in this position.)

Focus is a very important aspect of Aikido and this exercise creates an artificial 'focus' for us to imprint into our bodies.

## IKKYO

*Ikkyo suwari waza* appears to be attack and response, but actually we are responding to each other.

With *Ikkyo* we practice two basic directions, *Omote* and *Ura*. Remember the essence of the movement and, when doing *ikkyo* as *tachi waza*, remember to align your hands and feet.

In the case of *ikkyo* from *katatetori*, use your hand to secure the other person's hand — not to pull it away or off your wrist. For the hold-down, squeeze the wrist as you bring it down towards the mat.

Consequently, the moment uke's wrist touches the ground the technique is completed.

## IRIMI NAGE

*Shomen uchi irimi nage* combines the principles studied in *ikkyo omote* and *ura*. During the *ura* movement your hands go up. Concentrate on the moment of contact. At the moment of contact with the other person's wrist open your hand extending powerfully. Then cut down. This is the method of training in Aikido.

Remember to use your whole body so lower it in *irimi nage*.

## SHIHO NAGE

The essence of *shibo nage* is changing direction. When you step through you pivot immediately.

In the olden days a technique like this would have acted against the uke's elbow. However, nowadays we are moving so you don't usually see the application of this principle.

In *yokomen uchi shibo nage* both of nage's hands come up when uke strikes. The hands move continuously up then down, then up, then down, not stopping any any point. Nage's *atemi* is directed towards uke's face (not both catching the wrist), but don't practice reaching the face or you'll be too close.



Kokyu ho with Sugano Shihan -2006

### MOROTE TORI KOKYU NAGE

Lining up hands and feet is a very important principle. In the example of the most common **morote tori kokyu nage** when uke seizes from the correct 'off-line' position, you bring your hand to the normal standing position (beside you and pointing down). This aligns your arms and legs. Similarly, when you finish the throw your hands and feet should point in the same direction.

### KATATE TORI KOKYU HO

The purpose of **katate tori kokyu ho** which Sensei usually does at the beginning of class is to develop **ma-ai** (harmonious distance). It involves **irimi** and **tenkan**. The idea is to flex your legs; energy from earth flows through to your hands. Like pushing down on a ball, you feel energy pushing you back up. Take distance. This is not self defence but training to develop your perception of distance. Check your **ma-ai**. At the moment of contact bend your wrist as much as possible. There are three basic timings in Aikido:

1. Static,
2. at the moment of contact you move,
3. as your partner approaches you move.

Beginners do need to be aware of these three timing principles although we don't actually separate them much in training. Remember; every technique has distance, direction and timing. You have to get the idea of your whole body moving rather than how many steps you take.

### STUDY AND TRAINING

From the beginning follow your instructor. If you try to rationalise, it makes it more difficult. Later you may find a good explanation which will help you to develop a better understanding. The first part of the class consists of preparation exercises. Then remember the importance of the natural and relaxed position you observed in the earlier stance exercises when you are moving.

### AMA NO TORA FUNE (FUNES KOGI)

O Sensei said this was to purify body and mind. In moving from A to B you are working to purify it. In the larger sense in moving from A to B you have to ask yourself, "What is Aikido?" and, "What am I looking for?" Harmony with others through martial art: this was O Sensei's unique concept — an entirely new concept of martial art.

If you hang on to physical form you are merely left with fighting. Aikido breaks this traditional concept of martial art. In Traditional (Japanese) martial art kata form is central, but Aikido involves spontaneous movement. This leads us to an aspect of Aikido which is like modern

sport where much depends upon the coach. In Aikido each master tends to view and to teach things differently. Tora fune is like the movement of rowing a boat, but it comes from traditional Shinto purification.

### FURATAMA

Fura tama is 'shaking spirit' — grabbing universal energy in your hands and shaking. While you are doing this look down inside your body.

### AWARENESS, ATTENTIVENESS, FOCUS

From the moment you enter the dojo you must maintain your awareness. But training in specific techniques also requires both attentiveness and focus. Of these: attentiveness is more general whereas focus is specific. As your partner attacks you must remain generally attentive, but you also must be able to focus your attention and energy with precision. Harder training requires attentiveness. Aikido is not a sport in the conventional sense, and we are not aiming for physical performance. Tai-sabaki and ma-ai also require you to maintain your attentiveness.

### ON LIFE AS AN UCHIDESHI

Life involved training, cleaning the dojo, hurried meals, and more training — all day, and so you are always hungry. You had to be attentive to your teacher 24 hours a day, eg. opening the door before he reaches it. Therefore in training you continued this attitude on the mat. This is the traditional way. If you wanted to train you had to be attentive, to focus, and to follow him.

### AIKIDO

It is important to continuously re-examine the question: "What is Aikido?"

For fighting technique the method of training is different. The problem is most people hang on to the traditional idea of martial art as fighting...



Smibert Shihan: *the aim of Aikido is to improve ourselves and if we succeed in that then other people will be attracted to what we are doing...and for what Aikido has to offer.*

*The story behind this story is that at some time ago Sugano Shihan asked me to write down what he said as the basis for articles in the Newsletter. And the background to that was that we were always asking him to write something but of course it virtually never happened.*

*A student should see very clearly what the teacher is actually doing and Sensei was very concerned about this. He sometimes commented, "I'm showing them but then they continue doing what they were doing before..." and I came to realise how much weight he attached to our attentiveness (to the actual teaching) as the basis for progress at all levels. I don't believe that it was because he thought his own teaching was of particular significance, but that we should be capable of clearly seeing and responding to what was before us. At a Paris meeting of the IAF in the early 1980's when I was very concerned some unresolvable problem or other he said to me, "Well, at least you can see the problem..." so that like John Ruskin, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century art critic, I think he was saying that just being able to see clearly is an achievement. (Ruskin ran drawing classes for working people in order to help them 'see'...)*

*And so, for a short while, I was obliged to take my note book into class and train with it inside my gi so I could write whenever he stopped to explain something. I wasn't half as keen on doing this as my friends, Dave Scott, John Watson and others would have been. They must have been good at school. I wasn't! Nevertheless I did my best to record Sensei's comments during classes. What followed was that he would check it later — and so we ended up with this article. Reading it again now, I'm reminded of how clear and informative his instruction was. When I asked him about how he could say so much in so few words he simply said to me that he never taught something until he had studied it enough to understand it.*

*What we see here is the result. This is profound teaching from a great master. I hope I have been able to do justice to his instruction... But isn't that always the problem.....?*  
Tony Smibert.

## About Advanced or Senior Level Techniques by John Rockstrom 6th Dan



We often hear about kuden, hidden or secret techniques of the old martial schools, which were often passed down in oral form only. Only when a student was sufficiently advanced in their training and understanding were the kuden revealed to them. This was usually the last step prior to receiving a menkyo or teaching licence from the headmaster of the ryu.

Today, people tend to call them advanced or senior techniques - the slightly esoteric movements that take you from the realm of mortal student into the phantasmagorical region of unbeatable martial artist! Sugano Shihan often said during the early days of training with him there were no advanced techniques, just some more difficult than others to perform. He never split a class and gave the more experienced students 'harder' techniques, saying the only difference was the experience of the person practicing and we could all do the same technique, those with more experience had greater familiarity, nothing special.

With all this in mind, you can imagine our surprise and delight the first time Sensei said he was going to run an advanced class, just for yudansha. We were all so excited, we were about to be initiated into the mysteries of aikido! All the yudansha who were training with him in Sydney at that time (circa 1974) attended this very special class.

We bowed in, did the warm ups with extra enthusiasm, we were ready for whatever was to come. At the end of the warm ups Sensei had us stand and then he demonstrated correct hanmi, both right and left sides, how to place our feet the right distance apart, how to align the shoulders with the hips, keep your centre forward, etc.

The class went on like this, and for an hour and a half we practiced the most basic of basics, the stuff we did on the first night of training with him, and then we bowed out.

Our disappointment was palpable. We were dumbstruck, where was our special Master Class, the whizz-bang techniques that would make us invincible and introduce us to the unfathomable depths of aikido understanding!?

We had been given a Master Class, we just weren't experienced enough to know it. It took quite some time to

sink in, at least for me. And it continues to sink in the more I train.

The current, very strong emphasis, from the TTC is for us to concentrate on basics was because Sensei was not happy we were attending to the basic building blocks well enough. The most advanced movements are meaningless if you don't have the basic stance, steps and balance aligned. No matter how hard you try even easy techniques will prove difficult. You may think you're doing them OK but multiple attack ju waza or even speeding up the technique will quickly prove the error.

One of the prime directives from the famous swordsman Musashi Miyamoto in his 'Book of Five Rings' is, 'Pay attention even to trifles'. It can't be stressed too strongly, if you want to improve, look to the basics every time. Once they become a natural part of you no technique is too difficult, no series of moves too hard.

To those more senior students, say 10 - 15 years of training, who want to reach the highest levels of aikido technique, train even harder to truly understand the basic movements, those that were shown you in the first weeks of joining aikido - that's where the advanced techniques live.

Smibert Shihan  
beginning a TTC  
class with  
stepping into and  
out of hanmi. (Gold  
Coast 2006)



Sugano Shihan starting a bokken class with  
moving in and out of left and right hanmi



# Aiki Kai Japan Tour 2012



**16th - 30th September** includes IAF Congress Tokyo!

**Looking for expressions of interest to join this exciting 14 day tour! Reply by 15 May**

Aiki Kai Australia is again planning a fantastic tour of Japan to coincide with the International Aikido Federation congress in Tokyo later this year.

## **Draft Itinerary:**

- 16 Sept Australia – Narita
  - 17 - 21 Tokyo (IAF Conf. and day trips) Shinjuku accommodation (5 nights)
  - 22 - 26 Kyoto 5 nights (Day trip to Kurushiki and Himeji)
  - 27 - 28 Mt. Koya monastery stay- early prayers and meditation (2 nights)
  - 29 Mt Koya – Narita (tour of old Narita and temple complex) (1 night)
  - 30 Sept Narita - Australia
- This is a wonderful trip for the whole family! Those not attending the IAF congress will be able to go on day trips and have easy access to the excellent rail system to freely explore Tokyo and the surrounding country.
  - We'll be based 5 nights in Kyoto, with so much to see in the area, you'll have time to look at all the major sites. A whizz down the coast to visit old Kurushiki and the most beautiful castle in Japan, Himeji Jo, will be another highlight. Accommodation will be in a modern ryokan- sleeping on tatami, very Japanese!
  - On one of Japan's most sacred mountains, Koya San, we'll spend two nights in a centuries old Buddhist temple - be up early for morning prayers!

**Indicative total cost Twin Share: only \$4,900** (final costs due shortly)  
*departing Sydney*

(A very similar Wendy Wu tour is \$9,800!)

**We are looking for expressions of interest by 15 May,**  
so we know the tour is viable (min. persons 20 - max 25). Please email mail@ aikido.org.au with anticipated numbers and room requirements, e.g single, twin, family and any questions.



## ANATOMY OF A SUMMER SCHOOL by Beverley Webster



National Summer School, early on the first morning, is exciting — the pristine and serene dojo a vast sea of green mats neatly aligned and the glistening signs of Aikido waiting; the tingle of anticipation — of great teaching and tough classes to come and the joy of meeting old friends and making new. You can hear it in the rising tide of noise as people meet and greet until a clap restores order in the line-up and an expectant silence descends. Little time to spare a thought for the sweat and hard work that has gone into creating this space or the people kneeling beside whose efforts have brought it to this.

For the last 3 years, it has been my good fortune to be responsible for the organisation of Summer School in Melbourne; an obligation which has taken much time and returned much pleasure. My predecessor, Felicia Birman had done an excellent job. A superb people manager and a tough negotiator, she was never rushed, was always smiling and always made time to answer the smallest of questions graciously. Replacing her seemed a daunting task.

Business experience suggested that safety and success lay in planning and so I set off on a foray into the very backbone of organising these events. Despite having helped out at many schools, there were holes in my knowledge, aspects that I had not previously seen or thought about — the traditions and requirements, the many individual jobs that were time critical; and of course, the budget. Fortunately, most of Felicia's principal volunteers were happy to continue. Most were experienced, hard workers who willingly explained their role in the process. However, explanations prompted even more questions until slowly the jig-sawed picture of Summer School's underpinnings built up.

My most important outcome from planning has always been expressed, firstly, in the feeling within the dojo, calm and serene, everything with a place and everything in its place; panic a quicksand to be avoided at all costs. Harvey Konigsberg Shihan at Summer School 2012, described Aikido as being calm like a mill pond on top with a mighty rip curl underneath. He could have been describing my desire for the operation of the school.

Planning highlighted two critical and practical changes required: the operational time-frame, and management of the volunteer commitment. Summer Schools are impacted adversely by their proximity to the Christmas & New Year period, long school holidays and the summer closure of many dojos. The operational timeframe needed to move back so that most of the preliminary organising was completed by early December — a substantial change to the casual volunteer approach.

If planning is the backbone of a National School, then the volunteers make up the skeleton, they are interwoven and interdependent. However, organising a volunteer operation is vastly different to organising a commercial operation. In the latter there are

the imperatives of remuneration, responsibility and discipline. In the former there is only the immediate donation of time, uncontrollable and personal. This volunteer aspect concerned me until I heard a wise man say that with volunteers they give what they can, when they can and irrespective of whether it is right or wrong, early or late, you can only take what they give and thank them for their efforts. It's true!!

Awareness of the big picture or a common goal receives little consideration from most individual volunteers although it is probably critical to the overall cohesion of the operation. With regularly 60 and sometimes up to 80 volunteers contributing to a school, creating an understanding and appreciation of where and how they interrelated became another fundamental change essential to the thinking for an improved operation. It also produced a better understanding and much more precise use of the time being donated.

In three years, this approach has reduced the set up time by half and the breakdown time by two thirds. Documenting the roles and time frames for each function and producing a clear definition of the interdependences has also played a major part in these achievements.

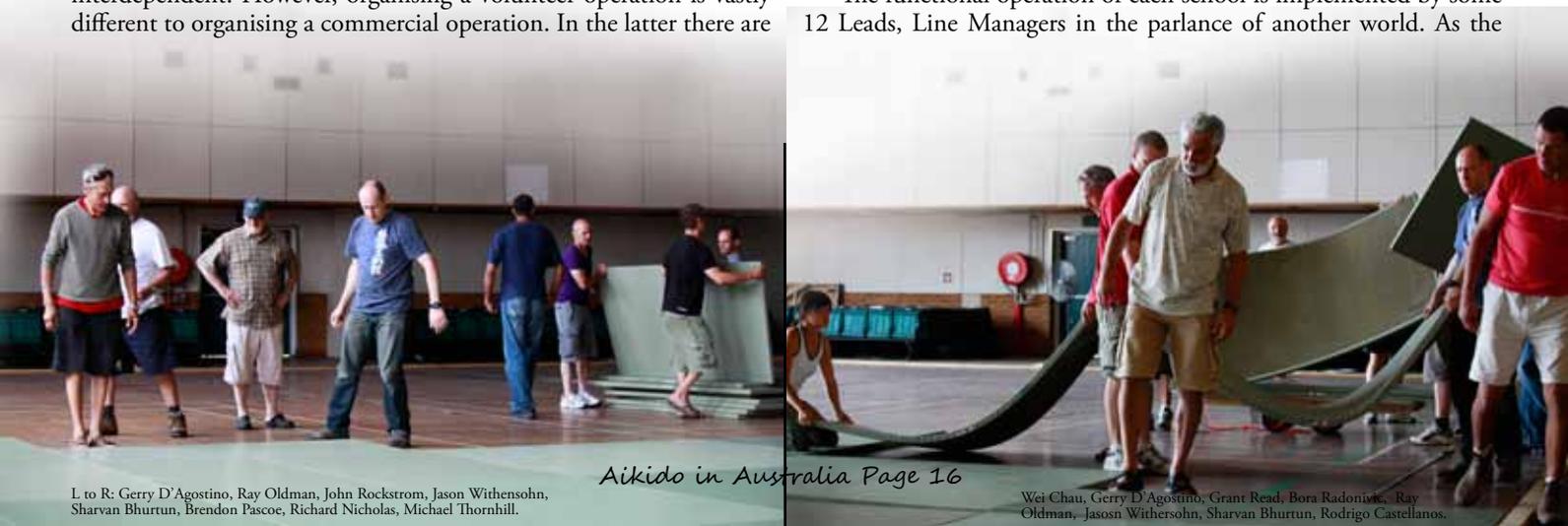
Aspects of the volunteer work simply require muscle power, moving heaps of stored furniture, hauling 280 mats from one dojo, to trucks, to another dojo, carefully laying them, re patching them neatly and cleaning them all in generally very hot or humid conditions. The 30 odd people who do this every year are to be applauded. Talking to a relatively junior, professional person who for years has attended each of these working sessions, I asked why he did it. His response, "I regard it as an integral part of the Summer School" surprised but also delighted me.

Hard work is best served with humour, a sentiment incredibly important to volunteer operations. This year had its fair share. Senior Dans, Ray Oldman and John Rockstrom brought their experience to the set-up and broad smiles to tense situations. Interaction with some of the "junior apprentices" present also provided entertainment and respite from the heavy lifting.

Not all the work is muscle power. Andrew Chambers has operated as Registrar for the last two years and in that time has built an online registration and reporting system to streamline our operation. Together with his two cohorts, they work tirelessly during the school often coming late to the class or missing some altogether as they cover their workload.

Generating interest in attendance is also necessary and those with a creative streak work behind the scenes at the creative communication task. Fellowship, a vital ingredient somewhat diminishing with time, needs thought and stimulation and allocation of resources to its execution.

The functional operation of each school is implemented by some 12 Leads, Line Managers in the parlance of another world. As the



overall planner, by the commencement of the school, most of my work is done, now is the time to watch. Using the analogy of the mill pond; watch where the ducks are or perhaps more importantly which duck is missing because therein lies a potential problem & it's time to investigate. No event operates perfectly or without error or the need to modify or improvise. Good planning, however, provides you with the time and manpower to address the variations without ruffling the mill pond's calm.

Summer School 2011 planning was well under way when the sad news of Sensei's passing arrived and the subsequent need to organise the Commemorative School arose. Anticipated to be a very large school, it was a privilege to be entrusted with its organisation. Looking at the situation, there were obvious additions to be made but initial approaches were not promising and most responses indicated they would be impossible to achieve. No stranger to this refrain, I determined to die trying. Fortunately, with help from a number of people, the retrospective photographic display of Sugano Shihan & Aikido in Australia and the Commemorative School booklet were both successful additions honouring Sensei.

Not all went smoothly on the mundane side however. Christmas week we were notified that 20 of the rooms from our accommodation allocation would now not be available. While this disaster was overcome, good planning ensured that the remainder of the school's organisation continued unruffled.

If my first test of success is calm and serenity, the second is noise. Contented people talk and laugh a lot, sometimes quite loudly, and happy people are a sure sign of a good school. The level of noise at the Commemorative Dinner in 2011 was deafening. Although the celebration of a sad event, the noise level indicated that attendees were well content with our efforts.

To all those, who each year give up time with family and friends to put together Summer School, I extend very sincere thanks. Your support, your willingness, your efforts and your good humour have all been much appreciated. Not everyone can or would want to take on the Organisers role for a national school, but everyone should think of sharing the load that these events carry. A small token of appreciation for all that is given throughout the year in the continuing operation of our organisation and our art.

Finally, we can plan all we like and work as hard as we like at setting up but it remains only the school's skeleton. The life-blood comes with students, those from near and far who come to study, to train, to learn. Hopefully these schools will continue to draw students from across the land for without students, all our efforts would be for naught.

## Training over Easter...

Over the Easter period A number of dojos around the country held special training days. Those that come to mind are Alice Springs in the NT, Bellingen Valley in NSW. Numbers in some were small while at others quite a few attended. We hope to print reports of these events in the next issue. As editor I would like to ask if anyone who had a special event over Easter would be willing to write a report of that event for this newsletter. I'm sure many members around Australia would enjoy reading about Easter Training events especially if there are some photos accompanying the report. So please don't be shy, send me a report so we can all know what has been going on.

Warwick had a TTC weekend on the 14th and 15th April, which really isn't Easter since it was the weekend immediately after, but it was close enough to be called Easter training. John Watson took us through a clarification of certain basic techniques after which we expanded on those same concepts and techniques to develop more advanced approaches which included both Bokken and Jo. It was a most interesting weekend and on the Saturday which was a full day of training with 3 hours in the morning followed after lunch by another 3 hours, we had 22 people of various levels from beginners to senior dan grades all helping each other and having a wonderful time. Ross and Kathy also supplied a beautiful lunch of fresh salads and various meats and styles of bread to choose from, which was enjoyed by all.



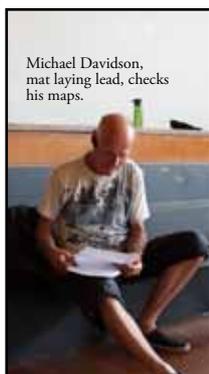
Wei Yng Chau, Ray Oldman  
Dave Bell, Richard Nicholas.



Final cleaning: Michael Thornhill spraying,  
Moppers: Sharvan Bhurrun, Thierry Garcia, Rodrigo Castellanos.



Dave Bell and James Field waiting for  
trolleys to unload mats.



Michael Davidson,  
mat laying lead, checks  
his maps.



Ray Oldman, shouldering  
the mat frames.

Getting it right to begin with... Wei Chau, Josh Taafe, Grant  
Read, Richard Nicholas, Alan Pawley.



Photos on these two pages by Tony  
Naughton and Beverly Webster.





# SUGANO SHIHAN'S SUMMER SCHOOL MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



# 2012

SPECIAL GUEST: HARVEY KONIGSBERG SHIHAN, 7TH DAN, USAF

2012 summer school promotions

## Summer School 2012 Report by Ross Barrell 4th Dan



### Shodan:

Richard Barry (ACT)  
Brian Bautista (Vic)  
Clifford Coetzee(Qld)  
James Field (Vic)  
Grant Read (Vic)  
Marcus Sanders (NT)

### Nidan:

Yusuf Iqbal (NSW)  
Joshua Taaffe (Vic)  
Sri Patnaikuni (Vic)  
Zig Pfauf (Vic)

### Sandan:

Andrew Chambers (Vic)

### Yondan:

Ross Barrell (Qld)  
Kathryn Henderson (ACT)  
Kathy Mc Carthy (Qld)

### Godan:

Eino Laidsaar (NSW)  
Jikou Sugano (NSW)

### Summer School photos by Brian Bautista...

The school was a very happy one. Many students commented on the overall clarity of the instruction. The long days of training maintained substantial numbers in each class which may have been due to the very mild weather that Melbourne turned on.

The instruction from Harvey Konigsberg Shihan was dynamic. In his first class he said, "*Aikido is calm on top like a mill pond with a massive rip curl underneath.*"

His demonstrations, languid and relaxed though they seemed, had a strong emphasis on hand and hip placement which amplified his statement and clearly demonstrated the hidden power of his Aikido.

A recent innovation creating great acceptance was the "Focus Class". The students were broken into 6 groups and a different instructor rotated in every 10 minutes. The instructors taught the same thing to each group focusing only on one aspect of the chosen technique. It was an hour of high energy and focused training which was quite exciting - particularly in the latter part of the school.

*Beverley Webster*  
(Secretary Aiki Kai Australia)

The two special guests at our annual summer School in Melbourne this year, Konigsberg Sensei and Louis van Thiegham Sensei are from New York Aiki Kai and Belgium respectively. Both trained as senior students under Sugano Shihan and both are considered part of our Aikido family. Both instructors were warmly welcomed and both will be equally warmly remembered. Clearly Aiki Kai Australia has forged strong ties with both New York and Belgium and it is with some considerable pleasure that we can look forward to more contact between our organisations. It is also noteworthy that since Summer School finished, Louis Van Thiegham Sensei has been promoted to Shihan. As the news item on the Aiki Kai Australia website states, "This appointment is a richly deserved recognition of the work Louis has done and continues to do in perpetuating Sugano Shihan's Aikido legacy through-out the world."

My impressions and memories of the training that Konigsberg Sensei presented at the 2012 summer School left me, and others with a deep and lasting impression.

Konigsberg, Shihan began studying Aikido at New York Aiki Kai in parallel with the start of his painting career as an artist, in 1965. His earliest Aikido influences include Yoshimitsu Yamada Sensei and Koichi Tohei Sensei with whom he trained in the early months of his training at New York Aiki Kai. This early training still influences his Aikido. In an interview with Aikido Online conducted early in 1999 ([http://www.aikidoonline.com/articles/more\\_Shihan/harvey.html](http://www.aikidoonline.com/articles/more_Shihan/harvey.html)) he explained Tohei Sensei's influence, "It kind of remains with me to this day, the things that he used to say about relaxing the shoulders, the one-point, the extension."

Since Sugano Sensei arrived in New York in 1988 to co-instruct with Yamada Shihan, Konigsberg Shihan was able to enjoy training at a dojo with two of the highest ranked instructors in the world. Speaking of Sugano Sensei and Yamada Sensei at New York Aiki Kai, Konigsberg Sensei told us that it was a great privilege to have two instructors of such high calibre teaching in the same dojo. "One was like the thunder, the other was the lightning," he said.

In the mid-1980s Konigsberg established a studio in Woodstock, New York. Since then he has maintained a presence in Woodstock as an artist and as an Aikido instructor, instructing at both New York Aiki Kai in Manhattan and at his dojo at Woodstock.

Konigsberg Sensei's comments in respect of Tohei Sensei's influences on his training are interesting in that Tohei Sensei was an early influence on Sugano Sensei as well. In fact I found Konigsberg Sensei's instruction highly reminiscent of Sugano Shihan's teaching. Even his gruff voice reminded me of Sensei and I found the training deeply refreshing and stimulating on a number of levels.

The three sessions he taught focussed on basic movements and fundamental principles. Moving from your centre, keeping Uke on the outside edge of the circle, always maintaining outward extension, keeping distance, keeping shoulders relaxed. If you lose extension (bend your elbow) even a little, you lose distance and create openings that an opponent can take advantage of or at the very least you will find yourself unable to move in the way you had intended.

Some of his comments during training:

"You always want to keep Uke on the edge of the circle."

"You have to connect Uke to your centre."

"If I move my centre when Uke is attached to me, I will move his centre. If I just move my arm, I will just move his arm."

"If Uke has hold of my wrist, that's ok. He may have my wrist, but I have his mind."

One of the hallmarks of Aikido is the sense of Nage's stillness and Uke's motion. Konigsberg Sensei explained that it's like looking at the ocean off a beach where the water is mirror smooth, but beneath the surface is the undertow. So anyone venturing into the water will be swept off their feet by the hidden currents. In Aikido we take Uke's balance by applying the undertow, the current that sweeps him off his feet and allows us to take control.

Summer school 2012 provided us all with very enjoyable and memorable training that will influence my Aikido for a long time to come. In fact I think it would be a pleasure for all of us to go for a swim in the still waters of Aikido with Konigsberg Sensei at a future national school.





## Mountain Training at Mount Hotham, Victoria

Photos and text by Diana Hope

Memories of mountain training at Mount Hotham will forever be stuck in my mind, from the coldest temperatures I've ever experienced, to doing amazing things I didn't think I'd ever get a chance to do in my life. The calm of the meditation sessions, and the thrill of not knowing if we'd survive the trek down a sheer cliff served as a contrast to the insights we were given into the historical and martial reasons for why we train the way we do. Lessons about posture and footwork became absolutely clear, and the beautiful scenery really made me appreciate not just being alive, but aware and fully open to my surroundings. Thank you to our teachers, our organizers, and everyone else who attended - I couldn't have asked for a more wonderful experience and I'm glad I was there with you.





More about Victoria Mountain training, next page.

## Mountain Training in Victoria March 2012 by Linda Godfrey Victoria Area Representative



Victoria held a second Mountain Training at Mt Hotham over the long weekend in March. We must have made appropriate sacrifices because we were truly fortunate with the weather and the mountains did not provide any of the dreaded march flies. The aim of the training is to continue to follow the traditions that Sugano Sensei established whilst at the same time provide a unique Victorian experience that enables us to develop and build upon the social fabric that binds all of us together. Partners and family were welcome and greatly assisted with the running of the weekend.

The training was led by Robert Botterill Shihan, John Rockstrom Sensei and Leon Metzeling Sensei. We utilised most if not all of our previous outdoor dojos from our inaugural Mountain Training previously held in 2010 plus we added a few more that involved interesting climbs and scenic vistas. We had 24 participants including a good mixture of Kyu grades and Dan grades.

The training began on Saturday afternoon led by John Sensei with a short walk and a lovely view overlooking Dargo. On Sunday Botterill Shihan at the summit of Mt Hotham at 1861 metres led our traditional sunrise meditation before dawn, and we were fortunate to experience a spectacular sunrise. It was followed by misogi and weapons training, but unfortunately it was the only time when we experienced rather cool conditions resulting in mild hypothermia for one participant.

A number of sessions we held over the days, consisting of weapons work and training without throwing. Following training on Sunday, we had an unlit evening meditation led by Botterill Shihan. A special session was held by John Sensei on sword drawing which was appreciated by all.

To aid accessibility the weekend was organised at a fully inclusive modest cost. We had extremely positive feedback from the participants, and the mountain training will continue at about three-year intervals so that it is kept as something special.

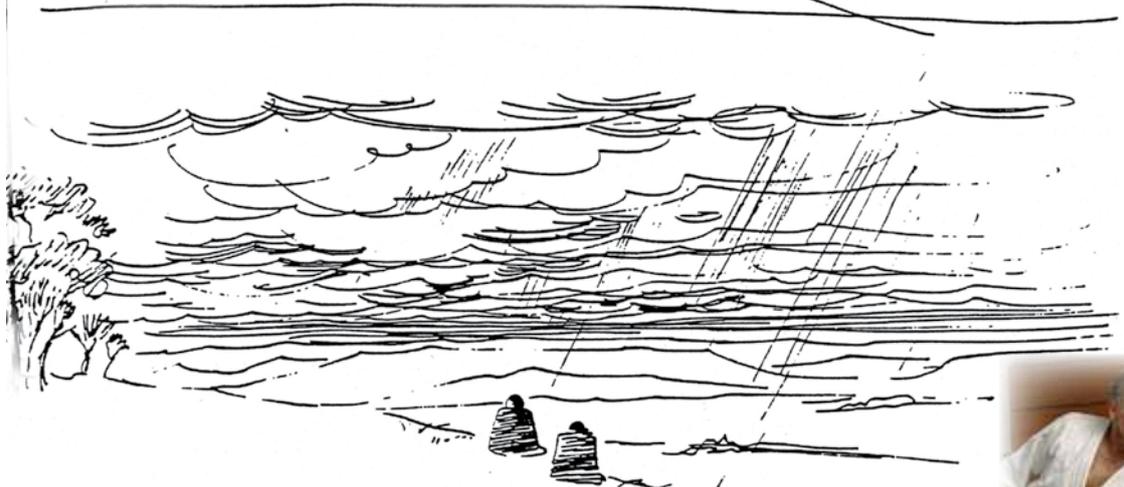
See below for a quote from a first timer on the weekend.

‘When I first read about Mountain training, I thought this sounds good let’s give it a go. When I look back on it now I have two thoughts; First off, they failed to mention spiritual frogs in the holiday brochure, and second, I want to do it all again. To have so many high level instructors & practitioners in one spot all willing to pass on what they know... I only hope that I can remember it all.’





How it should have been.....



How it was.....

One weekend in 1982  
by Wayne Sheils



The weekend of July 24 - 25, 1982

Saw another pilgrimage to Mt William by Victorian Aikidoists for the traditional mountain training. For more than half of the group, it was the first time they had taken part in the ritual. The sky was clear and the air warm as we set off from Ferndale for the walk to the peak. From some points of the climb it was possible, though not desirable, to see the largest buildings in the city, 45 miles away.

Once atop the mountain, a 'regular' training session was held. The origins of our art are easily forgotten when training regularly in a sheltered hall on a flat mat, but they are brought strongly to mind in the surrounds of the countryside.

After class, kototama was held. Kototama are the fifty sounds centered in humans that act together to make intelligible to us the impulses of universal life. Kototama is what I most look forward to in mountain training and for me to describe it would be an injustice to the practice.

The evening meal of rice and sweet potato is eaten in the seated position, (seiza) and this was a very trying affair as John Watson swallows no more than two grains of rice at a time, and then only after they have been thoroughly chewed.

The weather remained kind throughout the following meditation, the high cloud clearing to reveal the beauty of a starry night, then returning to keep the temperature from dropping too low.

There were a few stunned faces when '*shirts off funekogi*' was announced at the end of the meditation. The late night cup of sugar in hot water was very welcome, it being the only drink allowed from the start of the trip.

The night was mild for winter, with just the slightest of drizzly rain falling for about an hour.

We were all up the next morning to watch the sunrise which turned out to be a 'fizzer', it being no more than a red patch on the clouded horizon.

Another 'regular' class was held, this time with a bit of endurance training included. The formalities were brought to a halt with the closure of the mountain dojo, and then all of a sudden there appeared in the hands of the freshly purified bodies, some of the most un-misogi-like foodstuffs one might encounter. Alan was very popular for providing enough tea and coffee to wash down the milk-bar breakfasts of most. I only say most, because the really crafty ones knew that the home bakery in Kilmore was open on Sundays.

# *Aikido in Australia*

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 4



*...moments to remember...*