

With

Dojo Cho

Ueshiba Mitsuteru

Great grandson of the Aikido Founder



AKA AIKIDO SUMMER SCHOOL
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MELBOURNE - AUSTRALIA

Aikido in Australia

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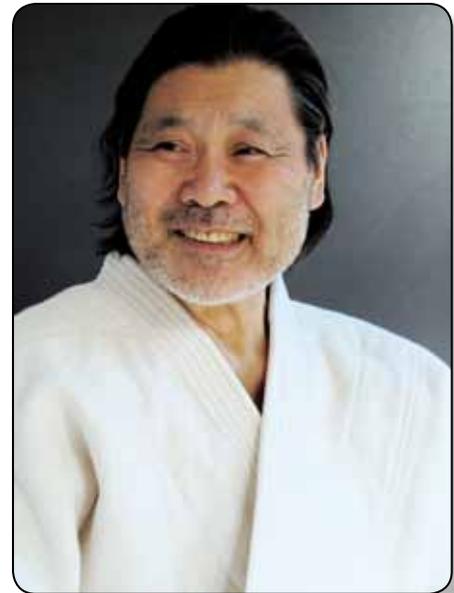
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All members are advised that Aiki Kai (Australia) is a signatory to the anti-doping policy developed by the Australian
Coaching Council and consequently all students are bound by the rules of the policy. A copy of this policy is available
on Coaching Council website.

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 Aus-
tralia's expense.*



Dan Gradings July 2016

Shodan:

Malcolm Barrett (Qld)
Nicholas Lanthimos (NSW)
Simon Pollock (ACT)
Sathvik Prasad (NSW)
Wade Rutledge (NSW)

Nidan:

Kei Murakami (Vic)
Mike Smith (NSW)

Sandan:

Ferenc Szabo (NT)

Yondan:

Felicity Peters (NSW)
Maciej Skierski (NSW)

Editor's note: *Some years ago (Spring/Summer 2001 - 2002) this publication featured an article by Linda Godfrey (**Where are the women in Aikido?**) outlining problems and issues she had encountered with women training in Aikido. Since Linda became the Area representative for Victoria, she has been pro-active in encouraging women to take up Aikido and has even published a book about Women in Aikido. She also is encouraging women in her classes to take up a teaching role as a way of further developing themselves and their understanding of Aikido as well as a means of encouraging other women and girls to take up Aikido. The reports on pages 4, 5, and 6, delineate her and her student's progress to date. Please read these articles for an insight into what is happening in Victoria.*

Bystander Training — A CHD Instructor Course Linda Godfrey Area Representative for Victoria

Following on from the 'Women In Aikido Forum' at Summer School, issues arising in general in the State and a successful trial at one of our smaller dojos our Member Protection Officers (MPO) Bill Birnbaurer Sensei and Adrienne Cleaver Long helped conduct the first in a series of Instructor Training at CHD. These are designed to change the awareness of issues that may arise in course of training and equip instructors and dan grades with appropriate means of handling such matters. We have had students who have been injured where the injury could have been prevented had someone intervened when they saw the practice was moving beyond the student's ability to cope. We know that some students have received unwelcome sexual advances during classes.

There have been quite a number of media articles appearing in Melbourne, some related to the focus on domestic violence through the high profile work of Rosie Batty — Australian of the Year in 2015 — whose son Luke Batty was killed by his father, some arising from racial vilification. There is also research on violence occurring in public areas such as 7 Eleven Stores, Service Stations and on public transport that has shown that when there are many people present who witness something happening that should not be, no one does anything about it compared to when there is only one or two people who see something. This is known as the 'Bystander Effect'.

It raises the moral dilemma of when to intervene and how you would feel if the victim was seriously injured or worse from non-intervention. In our dojos the direct result of doing nothing can mean injury but it can also mean we lose students because they walk rather than participate in a community that does nothing to look after them when this behaviour is known and seen.

From the conversations arising from the 'Women in Aikido Forum', early submissions and discussions related to the book called 'In Conversation with Aikido Women', and general incidents that I as Area Representative in Victoria have had to deal with over the past 18 months, *it was apparent that the 'Bystander Effect' unsurprisingly is in our aikido community too.*

It was also obvious that in order to effect change that the first steps needed include raising the awareness of the 'Bystander Effect' within the instructor community.

I asked our MPOs to run the sessions because it was from the basis of protecting all of our members that we wanted to look after our students. They were well supported by Robert Botterill Shihan and other 6th dan senseis including John Watson, Ray Oldman, Leon Metzeling and Peter Morgenroth. At the other end of the spectrum we had new instructors such as Luke and Diana Hope and most of the senior kyu grade students from Bendigo dojo. In total we had 30 instructors



and representation from nearly all dojos attend the afternoon workshop.

Whilst we had the added incentive of afternoon tea, it was extremely well received and the general consensus was that it was very valuable. Some messages were understood that it does not matter how senior someone is, if there is a student that is at risk of injury then intervention must happen. The instructors were keen to have further sessions like these in the future that address different topics.

So that instructors could really understand the basis of looking after our students the Member Protection 50 page policy was broken down into core areas and principles by Bill Birnbaurer sensei. Adrienne Cleaver Long in turn took it to a pragmatic approach to MPO that supports building an inclusive community. In other words, we want all students to feel accepted that the dojo is a safe place to train. She also built out this picture to students showing how they could and should and when to leverage the official roles such as Area Rep and MPO because these people are always available and will get back asap to any emergency situation or even as a sounding board as to what to do. Cases cited including a visit to a dojo from an ex student who had left under a cloud — with sound advice if it feels unsafe then leave immediately.

She encouraged instructors to 'adopt a senior or several' especially given how Victoria has such rich depth of instructors available in most dojos in the state. Senior students are always available to give advice on how to handle students who are perhaps unaware how they are using strength and causing bruising and other injuries to other students.

The workshop used several real life cases that had occurred over the previous 5 years the Area Rep had referred to the MPOs for investigation to workshop possible solutions. These generated much discussion, which got everyone thinking about what to do with very positive possible solutions offered.



Women in Aikido... Is Victoria is leading the way?

Teaching for the first time

by Dianna Hope

“I (want) to have a joint class taken by some junior women. Would you be willing to do it?”

I'm pretty used to being surprised by Linda-sensei, but this ranked pretty highly on the *WTF* scale. My reactions were: WHAT!?! — She can't be serious. — But I can't say no to sensei!

On one hand, I work in the training department for a huge global company, but on the other, I'm still only a shodan. Why don't they ask a “real” teacher — you know, one with experience!?

I mentally ran around screaming for a bit, and then said the only thing I could possibly say: “If you trust me to do it, I'll do it.”

After a couple of emails, and a walkthrough with Linda-sensei and the other “volunteers” on the day, I felt much better. During the warmup, I felt my mind and emotions falling into familiar places. Feeling everyone's energy during funekogi gave me even more encouragement, so by the time we started demonstrating, it was pretty much just like being uke during normal classes. Before I knew it, it was Irena's turn to demonstrate, then Adrienne's, then Kei's, then, class was over.

I'm sure everyone has thoughts about how they would teach a class if they were up the front. You watch your teachers, and decide if you would do things the same way or not. All I can say is REALLY do the first half of that. REALLY observe what is happening in front of you. REALLY think what is Sensei doing, what you can see and what you can feel? You hear this from them all the time, but when you need to explain what you saw to someone else? Someone who maybe wasn't there when Sensei first explained it? You have to learn it yourself pretty well!

In the end, it helped to hear that Linda sensei (and others I've spoken to) had exactly the same reaction when Sugano sensei first asked them to teach. Since then, I was asked to teach at the Glen Waverley Special Day of Training, and am now teaching at Monash University with Luke. I feel like there's a lot more “aikido” for me to learn, and it's definitely not just techniques.



Julie Boydell about to take ukemi from Dianna Hope

A Special Day of Training

by Irena Krohl

I think it is always a privilege to be given the opportunity to teach. In doing so one can contribute something back to the community that has facilitated ones own learning and makes that learning possible for ongoing generations of Aikidoka.

Of course when Linda Sensei asked me to participate in the special day of training aimed at encouraging and nurturing new teachers I had two reactions, “Yikes!! My understanding of Aikido is severely lacking” and “Well, it's not something one can really say no to!” It would be like throwing away a lovely gift.

The event had a light hearted and explorative tone to it and was a really supportive environment in which to practice the art of transmitting what one has learned to others. Linda Sensei gave us a structure to work within and guided us through out the process giving us some clues as to how to observe and respond to what we were seeing amongst the students.

As our particular class was specifically about encouraging female Aikidoka on the path of teaching, a gratifying moment came after the class as I received really positive feedback from one of the female teenagers who trains at my home dojo. I could see in her eyes and hear in her words that through seeing her female sempais teaching she could see a welcome place and future for herself as a female Aikidoka on the mat.



Irena Krohl at summer school in Tasmania



Adrienne Cleaver - Long

Special Day of Training
by Adrienne Cleaver-Long

**1st Yarra City Girl Guides visit to Aikido
Victoria at the Clifton Hill Dojo**
by Adrienne Cleaver-Long

I didn't expect the class to be terrifying – the idea and structure of the class that Linda-Godfrey Sensei presented seemed quite reasonable and safe. It wasn't like we had to think of an entire class, only demonstrate one section and help the other ladies as best we can.

I don't know if it was because there were more students in the class, or that it was labeled a 'Special Day', but I woke up a few days before with what I could only describe as panic attacks. I've never had this nameless dread before. What kept running through my mind as I tried to reason to myself was there was nothing to worry about - our seniors teach so effortlessly for each class they take whether it's a normal Training Day, Special Day, TTC or even a Summer School class.

Diana led the warm ups followed by the first technique of tsuki kote gaeshi. Kei and Irena followed with the next techniques, the degree of difficulty increasing with each demonstration. Everything seemed much easier now as the class is in full swing - there wasn't any time to be nervous. Linda Godfrey Sensei didn't make it easy for us – when we weren't teaching, we were observing and helping students, watching for safety on the mat, receiving for each other during demonstrations, as well as a chance to lead all of the groups in a tsuki jiyu waza.

Then comes my turn to lead the class in the final jiyu waza. I'm greeted by another mild panic attack (what? How many more?) and for a split second, no words come. All I can see are the people on the side of the mat. "What to do? How to do it?" And then from somewhere I start to remember examples from previous classes, seeing what our teachers have done before. So I borrow the general structure from a class I participated in before, imitate how another teacher spoke about the technique, and hope for the best. Concentrating on what to do in each moment helped immensely, and before I know it, my part of the class is over and we're finishing up.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated – the experience has been invaluable and shows that aikido offers a few unexpected surprises. I'm also grateful for all my teachers for showing me examples of what can be done.

About 15 girls, ages ranging from 11 – 16 plus 3 Girl Guide team leaders/ adult volunteers visited us on Saturday 27th February. The unit had heard about aikido through a cultural night on Japan some months prior and expressed an interest in participating in a class. We found out that none of the girls had tried aikido before.

Linda Godfrey Sensei asked me, Diana Hope and Irena Krol to teach the class. During a planning session prior to the class, Diana and Irena expressed their confidence in me as the lead teacher (thanks ladies). Additional volunteers Ray Oldman Sensei, Alex Raystin, Luke Hope, Onawa Gilkes and Kami Castellanos-Krol. The class had enough helpers that each Girl Guides group had somebody helping out at all times.

Diana and Irena started off the class by explaining various Japanese terminology and etiquette, including the calligraphy on the kamiza, gi, hakama and the term sensei. This led on to the warm ups followed by Katate tori techniques. The basic outline of the class was intended to be a balance between training and demonstration of techniques.

I had a vague expectation of what to expect from a children's class – the few times I have witnessed / participated in a children's class, there was a lot of energy and enthusiasm. I was surprised to see how quiet yet extremely attentive the Girl Guides were. They had no problem following instructions to the best of their understanding and athletic ability. They all had a go at each of the exercises/ techniques and took well to instructions from myself or my assistants. They were polite, patient and demonstrated a basic awareness of their environment.

Towards the end of class, there were giggles and laughs as their confidence grew. They were surprised when I used one of them to help demonstrate aspects of shiho nage – specifically how nages can stop their ukes from turning the 'wrong' way and wriggling out of the technique.

At the end of class, in order to show a variety of aikido techniques, I asked my helpers to perform a jiyu waza. They were asked on the spur of the moment which attack they would like to demonstrate.

continued on page 6...

Clearly everyone in this special girl guides class had a great time...



continued from page 5

My hope was that the girl guides would see:

- Diana, Irena and Kami's example that it is possible for girls to do aikido
- That aikido is a lot of fun! (There was a lot of joy and smiles)
- Aikido has different responses to deal with a variety of attacks
- The experience in aikido from the youngest (Kami) to the oldest (Oldman Sensei) aikidoka on the mat. Personally I'd thought it was nice to see our guys receive for Oldman Sensei.

They must have been satisfied with the class as they didn't ask any questions at the end of class. The girls perked up again at the sight of afternoon tea – their team leaders were thrilled to see the interaction between the senior and junior girl guides, not only on the mat but socialising afterwards. Kami became our ambassador at this time talking to everybody about her experiences in aikido.

Overall, the Girl Guides were extremely well organised which made the administration side so easy to deal with. They also expressed an interest in repeating this class again as part of their cultural events.

My helpers were fantastic and I couldn't have done it without you! We initially wanted a balance between the genders, but in the end restricted ourselves as word spread with many wanting to help out. I would also like to thank Alexander Rojas and his team of helpers on the Saturday Children's class who allowed me to observe a class as a 'training session'. A big thank you goes out to you all.

Diana's comment

I thought it went pretty well! All the girls were giggly and self-conscious at the start (as expected) but by the end of it, most of them were figuring out how to roll. The afternoon tea was lively and the girls cleaned up after themselves (!!!).

Irena's comment

I think it was a positive experience for all involved.

Extract from an email sent to Linda Godfrey after the girl guides class.

We really enjoyed ourselves, and I was so happy for the girls to be able to see that slightness of build doesn't mean inability to do quite powerful things, and that women can achieve senior rank in martial arts. I really appreciate the care you took to assemble such a large body of teachers, so many of them women, and also some girls of the same age as the Guides.

Gresley Wakelin-King
Yarra City District Manager
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Girl Guides Victoria
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PO Box 827, South Melbourne VIC 3205



Queensland Women in Aikido:



Rae Ming Ong practicing Riotedori Tenchi Nage Omote



Kathy McCarthy positioning for Morotedori Ikkyo Ura



Janine with David practicing Riotedori Tenchi Nage Ura



Order of Australia for Tony Smibert Shihan

This came as a surprise to our Aikido Community and we all congratulate Tony Smibert Shihan for being the recipient of such an honor announced on the 12th of June and reported the next day 13th June 2016 in several Tasmanian Newspapers as well as the ABC News.



In the Queen’s Birthday Honours in June this year, Tony Smibert was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) “For significant service to aikido through a range of roles, and to the visual arts as a painter and water colourist”.

The Order of Australia is Australia’s pre-eminent recognition for outstanding achievement and service; and Tony’s award is doubly significant to us in that it also effectively recognises the contribution which Aiki Kai Australia and all of its members have made to Australia over 50 years.

Tony’s contribution to painting and watercolour is as an internationally regarded artist, researcher, teacher and writer. But regarding his contribution to Aikido, what lay behind this award was also many sided: his role in assisting Sugano Sensei in the development of Aikido in Australia, his role as the first National Area Representative and Deputy President, and then, after the passing of Sugano Sensei, his leadership as the Senior Trustee of Sugano Sensei’s Aikido Foundation and as the President of Aiki Kai Australia. On the international stage, Smibert Sensei was for many years Vice Chairman of the International Aikido Federation, and is currently a member of the Senior Council of the IAF, directly appointed by the Doshu of Aikido in relation to the protection of Aikido. Aikido in Australia owes a deep debt of gratitude to Smibert Sensei and his family, especially to his wife Carmel, and to his late parents John and Cynthia – whose contribution in the early years was pivotal to our development as a national organisation. More than anyone else, Tony and the Smibert family have been key contributors to the growth of Aikido in Australia: it would be hard to imagine what Aikido would have been like without this generous contribution over more than half a century.

Etiquette in Aikido by John Watson Sensei



This article is an introduction to the etiquette required and used in Aikido. However I have not attempted to write a definitive list of what is correct etiquette and what is not. Rather, I have tried to offer a few pointers on basic etiquette, and then left it for everyone to reflect and find out for themselves about what etiquette is expected in Aikido. In this way I hope that learning about etiquette will follow the same method we use in learning Aikido in general. Initially beginners are given some basic instruction and then expected to watch and copy their instructors and seniors. At appropriate times it may be possible for students to ask direct questions to their instructors or seniors, whose role it is to offer some guidance and provide an environment that will enable students to develop. Learning about etiquette should happen as part of our everyday training. New students will be taught some basic etiquette. After that, their knowledge of etiquette will develop as they encounter new situations, as they see what other students do and through the guidance of their seniors and instructors. Instructors should demonstrate or model the etiquette that they would like those junior to them to use.

Further, it is important to remember that like Aikido techniques, etiquette is not fixed. The exact etiquette required may be different depending on where you are training, particularly if you are training overseas. The etiquette expected in a certain situation, may change over time. Etiquette has many levels and subtleties and there is always the need to keep studying it, and to be prepared to change ones understanding about what etiquette is appropriate or expected.

Here are some points of basic etiquette, which is the kind of information that those new to Aikido should learn in their first few weeks of training:

- Upon entering and leaving the dojo, make a standing bow.
- When stepping onto the mat or off the mat, always bow in the direction of the kamiza. The first time you step onto the mat and the last time you step off the mat you should make a seated bow towards the kamiza.
- If you are late to class, you should wait until the Instructor signals permission for you to join the class.
- The proper way to sit on the mat is in seiza. If you have a knee injury or other physical limitation then you may sit cross-legged. Do not sit with your legs outstretched.

- During training, when the Instructor demonstrates a technique to the class, you should sit quietly and attentively in seiza. After the demonstration, bow to the instructor.

- When the end of a technique is signalled by the Instructor, you should stop immediately and quickly line up with the other students.

- When receiving personal instruction during class, and the Instructor is using your training partner as uke, sit in seiza and watch with your full attention. Bow formally to the instructor when the personal instruction has finished.

- Keep conversations and talking on the mat to an absolute minimum.

- Do not leave the mat during practice without telling anyone, particularly if you are injured or feeling ill. It is usual to ask the Instructor for permission to leave the mat.

Even with a brief list such as the one above, there is much specific information that has not been included. For example, when moving into seiza from a standing position, which leg do you bend first? When doing a standing bow where do you put your hands? What is the 'timing' of bowing to another person? There is etiquette required in many other situations that have not been mentioned above, such as the etiquette connected with weapons, gradings, interactions with your seniors and juniors. Learning etiquette is and always will be ongoing.

Observing correct etiquette should always be an integral part of training as it is as important as any other aspect of Aikido. In fact some people say that it is one of the most important aspects of our training. This idea is encapsulated by the saying that 'the study of Budo (martial ways) begins and ends with etiquette'.

On a merely practical level, some points of etiquette help with safety on the mat. Using the correct etiquette all of the time involves effort, attention and awareness, characteristics that normal training requires and develops. Etiquette provides the opportunity to express our gratitude to those who help us. We can use it to show respect to others, particularly our seniors. We use etiquette to acknowledge O'Sensei and the ideals that he laid down when he developed Aikido. Ultimately etiquette should be a natural expression of our attitude and who we are, as we continue to develop ourselves through Aikido training.

Jack Sato in Cairns

Jack Sato Sensei's visit in Cairns 2016

Dominique and I were honoured to accommodate Jack Sato Sensei and Jemy Lim during their teaching visit here in Cairns in June.

Jack and Jemy know each other well from training together while they were both living in Perth, W.A. Jemy now lives in Singapore, while Jack Sato still lives in Perth with his wife and family. They were able to arrange to meet here in Cairns for the Aikido seminar. The seminar was held at the Grand Masonic Lodge of Carpentaria which has a great hall with a timber floor perfect for martial arts and dancing and is not far from our house.

Dominique had painted the guest rooms downstairs in an uplifting light blue and white French Wash.

They were pleased to have a lovely place to rest after their arrival. Their flight was two hours late, which made for a long journey. Dominique had prepared a Ragout (beef stew), which they both loved.

Once refreshed they joined us on the deck. Conversation is easy with them, one being Japanese and one Chinese they speak English together. Both of them have a great sense of humour and were good company. Sato Sensei shared stories of his training in Japan with us, not just in Aikido but also in Zen meditation. He said, if you do Aikido just for fitness, you are missing the point.

The seminar was well attended. Jemy was Uke to Sato sensei.

Their high level of skill and co-ordination impressed everyone and inspired people to engage even more seriously with their Aikido training.

Moona Perrotin

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Our Seminar with Sato Sensei
by Ignacio Ortega

Photography by Craig Middleton

Almost two months have elapsed since our weekend seminar with Sato Sensei however the memories of those two magic days stay strong and in the Cairns dojo we still keep talking about the man and his teachings in awe and admiration. It is going to be hard to put all this into words, but I will try my best. Let's start by saying that Jack Sato, Sato Sensei, is not a common person. This is something that you can feel almost the moment you see him for the first time. He arrives to the dojo in silence, already focused, his face grave but not severe, his walk graceful. He steps into the mat, bows to O Sensei, situates himself in seiza, turns to us and bows. All this is done with such solemnity and with such perfection of movement that you are automatically transported to a different place, another level of practice. You understand that thousands of years of tradition and transmission of knowledge from generation to generation have shaped these moves that now are displayed in our eyes.

Warming up turns out to be a masterful lesson about tradition, about the importance of breathing, about finding your ki, about meditation. About how to incorporate all this into your everyday life.

Then we move into stepping. Different ways of doing traditional katas, energy flowing on every move. Then the technique practice starts. Techniques that are new to us are explained with great accuracy and with a high level of detail. All of us try to keep up as best as we can, amazed at the technical skills of the man. Amazed as well at his inner energy, his ki. He seems to be surrounded by a sphere of energy that you can almost touch with your hands. That you can almost see.

15 minutes for a break. Sato sensei sits in silence on a chair, probably concentrated in what's next. I go to him to introduce myself. I feel I may be breaking some sort of internal harmony, however Jack Sato smiles and we have a nice little conversation. When it's time to start again and I return to the mat, his face changes and I see his seriousness is back. This is not just a bunch of people getting together to learn some new Aikido. This goes beyond, Sato is teaching a way of life, the aim for perfection, for self-consciousness, for peace of mind. At some point he addresses my 7 year old son. "Never give up, always work hard". My son bows in respect.

The seminar continues for the rest of the weekend at the same level. I have the chance to have lunch with Jack Sato on the second day. And my admiration for him only increases with this conversation. He outlines some stories about his training during his youth, his Zen studies, his discipline, and his life findings. I treasure that moment as well.

I will finish by saying that Sato Sensei had an incredible uke for this seminar, Jemmy. He flew from Singapore for the weekend and he was always at the level which believe me is a lot to say. He was always warm to all of us and by Sunday night probably a bit sore after so much falling around the mat! I will also highlight the seminar organisation and the venue – credit going to Dominique Sensei.

And this is it, I've tried to put my memories together as best as I could. At the Cairns dojo we feel very fortunate of having had this experience and we are looking forward for him to come back. This seminar has changed the way we train, and in more or less degree has touched each and every one of us at a different level. Many thanks again Sato Sensei.



Editor: From time to time things change. This report went out as an email from Austin James to members of NSW Aikido, but I thought, as editor, the rest of the country would be interested in what is happening in NSW. Quite a few may be aware, but for those that aren't I hope Austin doesn't mind me reproducing his email here.

Winter School Roundup and Changes to NSW Aikido

Winter School 2016 at Narrabeen was a great success and I thank all of those who participated or took charge of the organisation for their contributions. Our Shihans - Senseis Tony Smibert, Hanan Janiv, Robert Botterill and Roger Savage - all gave inspiring classes and our guests Peter Goldsbury Shihan and Louis van Thieghem Shihan provided insights into the breadth of aikido available. Peter Goldsbury Shihan also fascinated students with his detailed knowledge of the myths and legends of Japan. A number of other local instructors also provided interesting classes.

Special mention is also made of the contributions of Felicity Peters, whose driving organisation skills were exceptional and, Greg Tonowicz who stepped up, and into, Sensei Wayne Sheils' shoes as mat laying specialist and all-round practical solution expert.

Thanks again to all who gave to make the school a great success.

We experienced the highs and lows during the yudansha grading on the Friday. Overall the gradings were of an exceptional standard. Instructors and students are reminded that students preparing for a yudansha grading need a strong consistent year of study and physical preparation before attempting the grading. The TTC has signalled that it expects applicants to have spent a full year committed to preparation for the grading and intense study of the syllabus.

I cannot over-emphasise that the Technical and Teaching Committee (TTC) expect students to have regularly trained with senior instructors (both within NSW and through TTC weekends) to ensure they know the techniques and forms which the TTC expects them to be able to perform and that they can meet the physical requirements of the grading within their own capacities and limitations.

All students intending to grade for the 2017 summer school should already be actively ensuring they have trained with the senior instructors in NSW (Senseis Roger Savage, George Lo, Steve Armfield, Andrew Dziedzic, Wayne Sheils and Machiko Hirata) as often as possible. Additionally, you should ensure you are improving stamina and focus!

Results from the Gradings

Yondan (4th dan) - Felicity Peters and Maciej Skierski

Nidan (2nd dan) - Mike Smith

Shodan (1st dan) – Sathvik Prasad

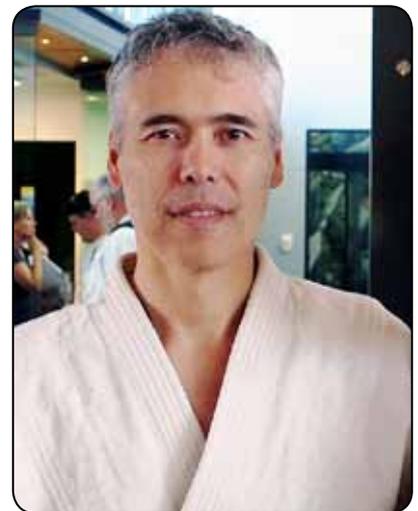
Nick Lanthimos and Wade Rutledge will represent to Roger Savage Shihan in the next 6 weeks.

Changes to NSW Area Representative

Recently Tony Smibert Shihan asked me to take on a new role as chief administrative officer of the Aikido Foundation – a role which will be a good challenge and very demanding. I was happy to accept and suggested it was a perfect time to inject new blood into Aikido NSW leadership and suggested Jikou Sugano as my replacement as Area Representative. Smibert Sensei and the other Trustees of the Aikido Foundation were happy to endorse Jikou Sugano who will transition into this role over the next 8 weeks.

I am very pleased to pass on this role to Jikou Sugano who, as many of you will know, is an exemplary student of aikido with a good and true heart and a commitment to maintaining our aikido traditions. I thank you all for the opportunity to serve as Area Representative over the past nine years.

Austin James



Jikou Sugano





Special guest instructor
Peter Goldsbury Sensei 7th Dan Aikikai Hiroshima, Japan
The Chairman of International Aikido Federation

Special thanks to:
Tony Smibert Sensei 7th Dan, Robert Botterill Sensei 7th Dan, Hanan Janiv Sensei 7th Dan and Louis Van Thieghem Sensei 6th Dan





Aikido Retreat on Tenchi Farm 2016
by Martin Bratzell

The retreat up here on Tenchi farm was one of a kind. It was a blending of focused study of Aikido of 27 classes over 9 days, with the experience of being and living together, of deepening friendship and a closeness to nature.

I could tell how monumental it had been by the waves it stirred up in my consciousness. The fifth hour on the second last day stretched me beyond where my heart and center could follow and I became aware of intense thoughts and emotions. We were practicing *ikyo gaedan* from *shomen attack*, an old favorite Hombu technique that I loved doing when I practiced there. This time I felt totally incapable of applying it to a reasonable standard and got suddenly hit by strong emotions. I felt frustrated, drained, exhausted and overwhelmed, drowning in a vibration of self-judgment, of hopelessness and despair. Strong emotions along with unfamiliar thoughts: "I wasted my life doing something that does not work and I do not enjoy. I should have done hang gliding instead!"

It was as if for a moment I was catapulted into another reality not knowing where I was or who I was, then like a fist in my tummy, I remembered: "and I just built this Dojo; there is no escape. While I did not build on those thoughts but kept coming back to what we were doing, I was impacted strongly by its intensity and could not fully shake it off for the rest of the weekend.

The retreat was the closest I had ever come to an *uchi deshi* week and I realized I had a *deshi* moment shifting from experiencing to observing and not quite sure who it was that was doing what. I sensed what was happening mirrored the enormity of the event and also the insights I had received through focused practice and expert guidance.

The retreat was two weekends and the time in between. I had suggested it to Bodhi and John Rockstrom quite casually and to my delight they both agreed. I slipped it in while they were both busy preparing for the Tassie Summer

School and, I reckoned, maybe they had no time to think it through. But the year of the fire monkey was coming up, my year, and I felt that the stars were on my side. I sensed compatibility with Rockstrom Sensei whose steely Samurai spirit somewhat differs from my more casual, indigenous approach. He is a man of the world with a great sense of humor. He not only sees the beauty of Tenchi Farm and has been a great supporter, but he also likes drinking good whiskey. Being a man of spirit myself, I saw potential.



He decided to visit the Northern Tassie Dojos during the week and we trained in Launceston, Devonport and Deloraine and did some sightseeing on the way.

John Rockstrom brought a Tibetan bowl along and in the early morning classes we did various misogi meditations often listening to the exquisite sound the bowl made when struck. We let the sound echo in our own body and focused on it while in a second sitting changed the focus and travelled into the bowl and into the sound. I loved that meditation and the concept of the duality of it.

I also loved those many personal insights I received. They were moments of clarity, glimpses of understanding and recognition and they seemed to happen to all of us and became part of the collective experience. Rockstrom Sensei called them satori moments and they contributed to this sense of awe and mystery. Words do not do them justice because in my case anyway those insights were connected with simple things like noticing how I let go of my softness when a strong attack occurs and how I look for salvation through physical force and therefore become the obstacle to free flow and extension. Or seeing how crucial it is to move around the fixed point of a wrist hold rather than manipulating or struggling with it. Similarly I became aware of my tendency of a sideway pushing against an attacker's weapon. There was the clarity about controlling the partner's shoulder with ikkyo not just the arm. Shomen attack becoming Yokomen through a turn of the hip I felt I understood for the first time through my body not just through my mind. I still remember the glow on the face of John Karas Sensei as he got a jolt in his understanding of Aikido or Bodhi, on the same topic, remarking once that so much is happening one could write a book about it.

A seriousness and focus on the mat was matched with outrageous humor and cathartic laughter off the mat. Kubota Sensei would have been proud of it. There was the joy of eating good food and drinking fine whiskey in wonderful company teasing each other on the basis of friendship and respect. The attitude towards chores like cleaning the dojo or the kitchen or preparing food was impeccable; doing them felt more like playing or dancing than work and made them a natural extension to the Dojo training.

My relationship with JR as a true Master on the mat and an esteemed friend and equal off the mat helped me to end or at least improve my inner struggle with the system of hierarchy. As Aikido being the one thing we all had in common it permeated all of our talks and activities providing us with food for thought through interesting angles, reflections and unusual stories which were part of the many highlights for me during the retreat. The connection between the Shinto way and the Aboriginal way in the importance of the ancestors and a spirit of aliveness in everything was one of them.

Early on, we took a walk into the forest with the intention to honor and acknowledge the people before us on this land and also the Aikido and our own European ancestors. Just as we were about to enter the woods a low flying eagle appeared seemingly saluting our intentions. Similarly significant for me was Nature's timing of breaking the long Tassie drought towards the end of our time together. It coincided with an outdoor bokken training which John Rockstrom announced with the words: "Rain would be good when we do it." Of course it poured as soon as we started it. When we had done it for a while, slipping and sliding, Roger the gas bottle delivery man showed up, doing his job seemingly oblivious to those white clad figures going after each other with wooden swords dripping wet right next to him, his body language very different from the cows that came quite close another time. They were not hiding their curiosity at all, but watching with interest, looking relaxed and casual in a bovine sort of way then scratching their heads with their hind legs, trying to make sense of it all and eventually walking away, utterly unimpressed.

The 9 day retreat has written a new chapter in the story of Tenchi Farm and heartfelt thanks go out to all the support we received. Support from the Tassie team coming up on the weekends, to John Karas Sensei for taking part in the retreat and role modeling his desire to train, to learn and to grow. Of course our great appreciation goes to Rockstrom Sensei running the show generously and impeccably, sharing himself on and off the mat with his wealth of knowledge, his traditional and authentic approach to life and his exploration of the balance between the hardness of the Rock and the softness of the Stream. Last not least our thanks go to Tony Smibert Shihan for coming up and joining in, as his travel schedule allowed and for the warm spot in his heart for Tenchi Farm Dojo up here.

The retreat was about Aikido, Community and Nature. The glue that held it all together expressed itself in many ways through inquisitiveness and a desire to grow; through friendship, harmony, humor, joy and appreciation of each other's company. The simplicity of the vision surprised me when I heard myself casually say to JR early on that all I wanted for people to come here was for them to be happy. Not a superficial happiness but one that is inclusive, healing and gives meaning. One that contains Spirit and is built on the solid foundation of practice and love for Aikido, which is not different from the love for humanity, the love for the planet and indeed the universe as a whole.



Tenchi Farm Retreat – Visitor Interview

By David Claridge

Of the people that came to the Tenchi Farm Retreat in April, one in particular caught everyone by surprise.

César Leonardo Guerrero Ayala, an aikido student from Mexico City, in what was his first time in Australia, came to see what the Retreat was all about.

Originally planning to visit his sister who just had a child, he researched things to do and dojos to visit in Australia while he was here.

César said how his connection with aikido encouraged him to travel across the world and take part in the event.

“My sensei always said, ‘try to practice aikido wherever you go, everyone has something to teach you’, I saw the retreat on the website and I signed up.” He said.

“At first I was a bit shy because I didn’t know anybody, but because of everyone’s happy attitude I felt at home.

“Of course, after the retreat I went to spend time with my sister and her new baby.

During the week he spent in Tasmania, he joined the group under the teaching of Sensei John Rockstrom and studied aikido during the day in an uchi-deshi style experience and visited northern Tasmanian local dojos at night.

César wanted to thank everyone who he met in the Tenchi Farm and in the Dojos he visited at Launceston, Devonport and Deloraine.

Hopefully César can return to Australia one day for more aikido.

In a recent email the NSW Area Representative, Jikou Sugano Sensei, pointed out he observed some people unable to train as normal because of minor injuries, and that they had recently had an injury that was serious. No doubt each state has had its minor as well as serious injuries and this is a trend that seems to be increasing.

Jikou Sugano Sensei went on to say that we all need to practice safely together. And he listed a number of things we can do to reduce injury and increase safety.

Warm up before class

Improve ukemi

Be aware of who and what is around you

Don't throw uke into the path of others

Respect weapons

Listen to instructions

Be attentive.

In addition to our physical condition, it's also important to observe our frame of mind, our emotions and ego and how they influence how we train together. Safety should not be seen in isolation but should be integral to diligent training.

A Report by Andrew Dzedzic



This year marked the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the International Aikido Federation (IAF) of which Aiki Kai Australia is a proud founding member. The IAF holds a Congress of all its members every four years, and Australia has sent a representative to every full Congress. In the early years it was Sugano Sensei who attended, joined by Tony Smibert in 1980. Tony was soon elected to the Directing Committee and for most of his time on that Committee was Vice Chairman - on retiring he was elevated to the IAF Senior Council by Doshu where he has been for the last 8 years. On this occasion a major figure in the IAF, Peter Goldsbury, stood down as Chairman after 20 years in that post, and having been 32 years on the Directing Committee. Kei Izawa Sensei was then elected as Chairman, and all the other officers of the Directing Committee changed - apart from Frederic Heylbroeck, who is President of the French side of the Belgian Federation and a student of Sugano Sensei and Louis van Thieghem Shihan, which makes him a member of our extended Aikido family. Fred will be here for Summer School with Dojo Cho Mitsuteru Ueshiba Sensei next January.

As was the case on the last occasion, the Australian Delegation consisted of myself, and Botterill and Janiv Shihans, with assistance from Jikou Sugano Sensei. On this occasion ten new national Federations were admitted to membership of the Federation, bringing the total membership to 54 - a good indication of the increasing stature of the IAF. Australia as usual participated in the Embu at the end of the Congress, which was done by Jikou Sugano Sensei. Smibert Sensei also made a Shihan demonstration - and you can see the 'live stream' of all the whole embukai on the IAF's website <http://www.aikido-international.org/index.php> or go to the IAF

40th Anniversary IAF Congress and Seminar



Above: Jikou Sugano Sensei, Andrew Dziedzic Sensei, Hanan Janiv Shihan, Robert Beotterill Shihan and Tony Smibert Shihan.
The Australian contingent at Hombu with Doshu.

Facebook page for edited, individually filmed videos of some of the demonstrations.

A highlight for us was that Aiki Kai Australia through the hard work of Linda Godfrey Sensei hosted a Women's Forum along the same lines as the one we held at our 50th Anniversary School in Melbourne. The room in which the Forum was held was filled beyond capacity with standing room only left. On this occasion, the panellists were Linda Godfrey as Chair, Micheline Tissier Shihan, Janet Clift Shihan, Teresa Wang Shihan, Pat Hendricks Shihan and Ruth Treyde Sensei. Luckily the whole Forum was filmed and an edited version is also viewable on the IAF website. Congratulations to Linda, Ruth and their team on their success with this event.

Among those attending the Congress from Australia was a group of folk who chose to join our organised Aiki Kai Australia tour. This provides an easier way for Australian students, who might not otherwise go to Japan, to attend the Seminar, the social functions and to round off with a week of touring around Japan afterwards. It was my pleasure to lead this group of 20 participants, including 3 non-training partners. So: after Takasaki, we travelled to Tokyo, where we attended Doshu's Class then had a bus tour of Tokyo. This was followed by 3 nights in Kyoto, including a bus tour, and training at Okamoto Sensei's dojo - one of the very few Japan dojos headed by a female teacher. From Kyoto we travelled to Hiroshima to see the famous Peace Museum and Castle, before a day on beautiful Miyajima Island, where we stayed in a ryokan, before moving onto our final destination Kurashiki, to experience a beautifully preserved Meiji-era town. Aikido and Japanese culture in an exhausting but very full itinerary!

Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation has previously an-

NEXT GENERation initiative

nounced an initiative to foster closer ongoing ties between the upcoming “Next Generations” of students in Aiki Kai Australia and the future Doshu of Aikido, who is the current Dojo Cho of Hombu Dojo, Mitsuteru Ueshiba Sensei. This will be of potentially great personal benefit to each participant, and will also be of great future benefit to Aiki Kai Australia, in encouraging ties between our next generations of students, the future Doshu and Hombu Dojo.

Meetings have been held with the Doshu of Aikido and the Hombu’s International Department, and this initiative is being set up with their encouragement and full co-operation.

A. Stages

It’s proposed that in the first stage, the initiative be in 2 parts:

(a) the Dojo Cho will get to meet next generation students at Summer School, to be held in Melbourne from Tuesday 17/1/17 until Sunday 22/1/17; and

(b) a small group of students will be given some assistance by Sugano Sensei’s Foundation and Aiki Kai Australia to fly to Japan to train at Hombu Dojo - the proposed dates are training from 23 to 28 April and to meet with Dojo Cho socially at a dinner on 28 April, and then a visit to Iwama for the Iwama Festival on 29/4/17 (where the Doshu will do a demonstration).

Depending on the outcome of the initiative, there may be future organized events towards involving these and perhaps other participants. Aiki Kai Australia is also waiving training fees for a selected number of Next Generation students from Singapore and New Zealand who wish to attend our 2017 Summer School.

Criteria for selection:

All participants to be

- at least 2nd kyu,
- keen and fit,
- aged between 16 and 45, and
- must attend Summer School 2017;
- must indicate willingness and availability to attend Japan leg of this initiative, and to fund the balance of the trip costs beyond the subsidy provided.

B. Leaders

The participants on the Japan leg will be led by Jikou Sugano Sensei who will also act as a mentor and liaison with Hombu, and Tristan Derham our Vice President.

C. Funding

The Foundation Board will put up \$1,000 per student for 8 or 10 students. (Other students unsupported by this funding will be welcome to join the group.)

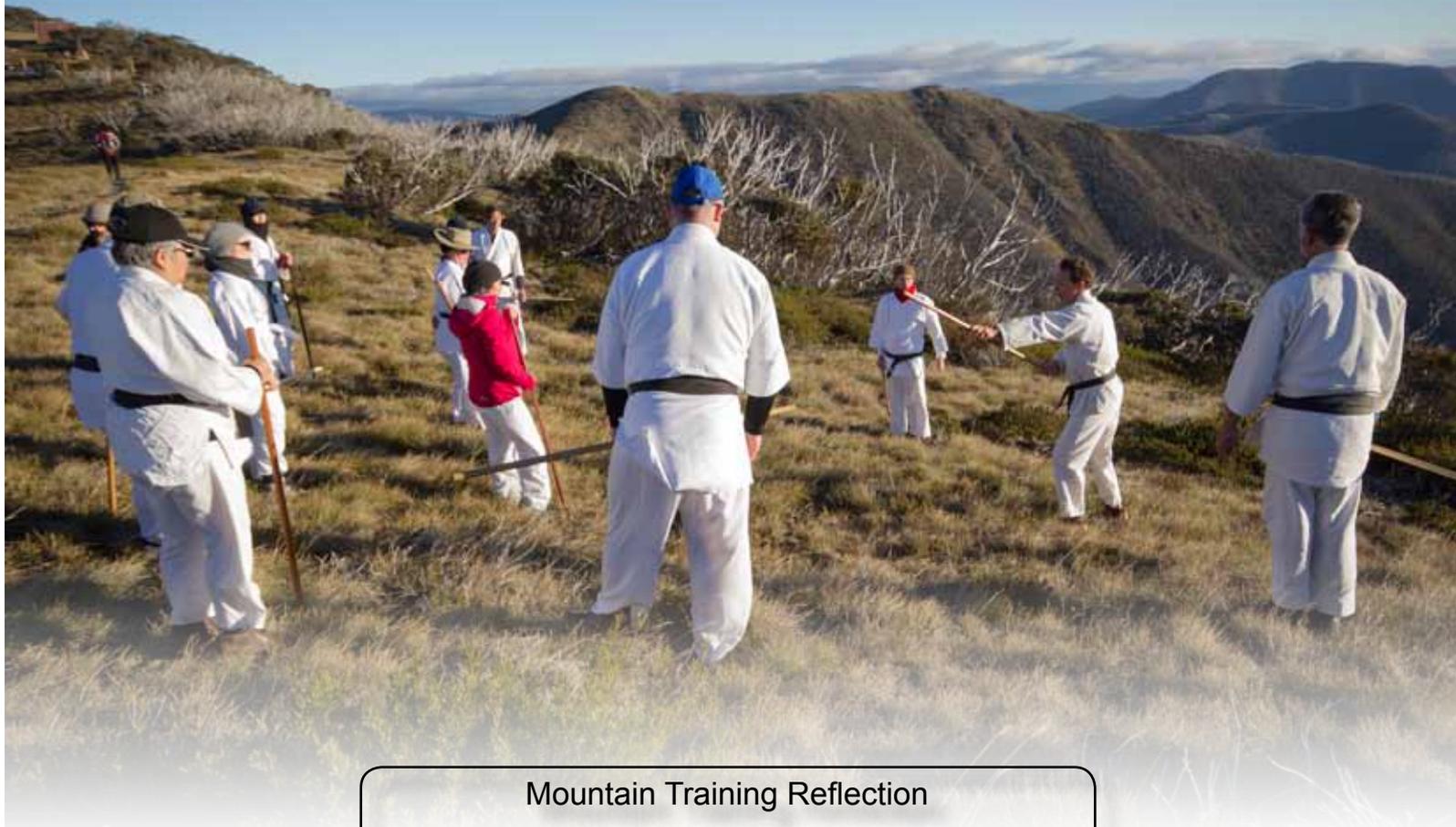
This will be on the basis that Aiki Kai Australia will provide \$500 per selected student for up to 10 students, and there will be a request for local state or territory organizations for each student to provide \$500 each towards the trip.

D. Expressions of interest.

If you are interested in being part of this initiative, and can meet the above criteria, please write to Andrew Dziejdzic before 20/12/16 via email to dziejdzic@bigpond.net.au

Photos courtesy of Diana Hope.





Mountain Training Reflection by Cassidy Livingstone

Mountain Training was a really incredible experience. Being fairly new to Aikido, when I signed up to travel to Mt Hotham for four days with my teachers from Heidelberg to train and stay with a group of largely unknown people to me, it was both very exciting but also nerve racking! However, any doubt I had about training as such a beginner amongst highly experienced and respected aikido practitioners and teachers faded pretty quickly once we got to the mountain.

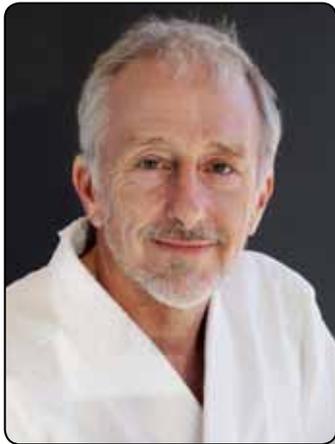
We were lucky enough to stay at the very comfortable Eiger ski club lodge, where the atmosphere was relaxed and inclusive of all no matter how long you had trained. Immediately I felt so lucky to be spending time in such a beautiful part of Victoria with people I would otherwise rarely see and speak to. Hearing everyone's stories and making new connections made training feel even more special.

We had a few training sessions each day, every time in a new outdoor location with different Sensei's and styles of teaching, often with a focus on weapons work. Training outdoors was already a new and refreshing experience for me, but having the privilege of learning from so many experienced teachers was the real highlight. It was often challenging learning new techniques, in addition to sometimes being on uneven or difficult training terrain – but just like I have experienced so far with Aiki Kai, all of my training partners were patient and eager to help me develop and improve, and emphasised that we were all learning from each other.

A couple of my favourite moments from this weekend were the sunrise and sunset trainings. For sunrise training, we woke up at around 5am and made our way to the top of a hill where we meditated watching the sunrise, and went on to train facing the moon with the sun on our backs, surrounded by an amazing view of the mountains. The dread of such an early wake up was definitely worth it in the end. Sunset training was held at Mount Feathertop. The view was stunning and the focus on weapons work was very fun, however at times I struggled to keep grip of my weapons as I couldn't move my hands because of the cold! Training on a slight slope with uneven ground and strong winds made for a very memorable training session - I suspect knowing we had a warm comfortable lodge to go back to after sunset with plenty of delicious food helped everyone stick it out through the wind!

Overall, I had an amazing time at mountain training and would recommend it to any aikido practitioner, even if you are a total beginner like me! I learned so much, got to meet and train with great people, and have taken away lots of memorable moments that I feel very lucky to have experienced. I came away feeling refreshed, inspired and ready to learn more. Thank you to everyone who helped organise the weekend!

More on Mountain Training in Victoria pages 22, 23.....



Foreword

TONY SMIBERT

7th Dan Shihan / Aiki Kai Australia President
Sugano Foundation Trustee / IAF Senior Councillor

In January, 2015, we celebrated the first 50 years of Aikido in Australia with a wonderful seminar in Melbourne led by Doshu Ueshiba Moriteru and attended by friends, trainees and teachers from around the world.

We welcomed the start of the next 50 years when successive generations will keep alive not only the form and spirit of aikido but also the heritage and example of Sugano Shihan and other great teachers of his generation who worked so hard to ensure that people around the world have full access to this wonderful art.

We marked the celebration with an important forum — ‘The Journey of Women in Aikido’ — at which senior instructors from around the globe (who also happened to be women) shared and discussed ways we can all ensure that aikido is open, equal, positive and welcoming to both sexes.

I was very interested in the following: if women make up half the population of an average community, how come they make up such a small part of our aikido population? Are there things we are doing badly or wrong? Are there things we could be doing differently, or better? I’m inclined to agree with a close friend and fellow trainee who said to me years ago that she felt it very possible there might be qualities to aikido that would only become apparent when there were very high ranking females throughout the echelon of senior teachers around the world. This would take time, she added, and wasn’t a situation that could be contrived. It would come naturally.

Well, the world has changed since then, so that, while sadly acknowledging the passing of outstanding figures such as Sugano Sensei, we can also happily note the increasing numbers of senior trainees, teachers and Shihans who are female.

One night in our local dojo, I looked around and suddenly realised that I was the only male among the trainees. It doesn’t happen all that often, but the point was that I hadn’t noticed because the training was as great as ever. Aikido is no more the province or property of men than it is an art that can only be understood by people who are Japanese. If it truly is, as O Sensei said, a universal idea, then it will only be completed when we can all contribute to and receive from it, freely and equally.

Sugano Sensei sometimes described aikido as a way to ‘cultivate a human being’. He didn’t say it was a way to cultivate men – or women – only. Aikido was for all of us.

The forum was a great success and allowed a number of important perspectives to be heard. In my own case I found myself considering issues and situations experienced by many trainees that I never had to deal with in my own life simply because, as a male, I was not confronted by them.

At the time of writing, I have not seen any of the essays that will appear in this book. So, as with the forum, I look forward with interest, excitement and the hope that this small volume will contribute real value to the future of Aikido.

The Aiki Kai Australia Teaching Committee and the Sugano Foundation Trustees believe that this is a wonderful initiative and recommend it to all students and instructors. We also thank the instructors from around the world who have made it possible, especially the editor Linda Godfrey Sensei.

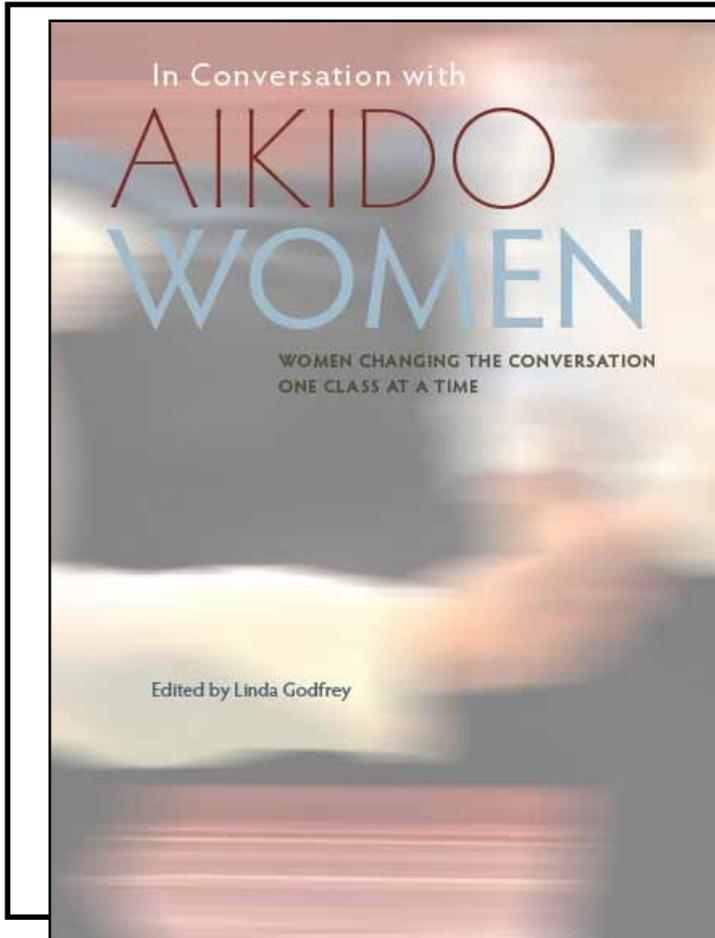


TABLE OF CONTENTS

7 / FOREWORD: Tony Simbert.

9 / INTRODUCTION: Linda Godfrey

 Felida Birnan 13	 Sharon Dominguez 19	 Ruth Trayde 31
 Ruth Peyser 41	 Linda Godfrey 51	 Malony Graham 61
 Kaye Jenkins 71	 Debra Crampton 77	 Machiko Hirata 89
 Christine Wong 97	 Marie Peteru 101	 Michelle Feilen 109
 Margaret Dinan 115	 Vivienne Etter 119	 Chantal Danthine 125

*In reference to the book cover, editor Linda Godfrey said: **The whole design reflects the paradigm of the women in aikido. It is a deliberate design that reflects the subtlety that women bring. We don't stand out but we are there.***



Aikido in Australia Page 21



Aikido Mountain Training – Hotham April 2016 –
Tristan Smith, Glen Waverley Dojo, Victoria

The experience was called “Aikido Mountain Training” – a special three-day event that takes place once every three or four years. As I have a deep love of the country and Aikido, the idea seemed like a winner to me. The real selling point however, was the palpable enthusiasm of the people who had been to one or more of these events before. That, and the twinkle in the eye of senior black-belts at the mention of Mountain Training. An enigmatic grin from either Linda Godfrey Sensei or Robert Botterill Sensei is a warning sign for many things, all of them worth-while. In my experience, it often means that a student is about to learn a lesson in a way that is amusing to the observer. Yet every now and then, it is the harbinger of an epiphany that will stay with the student, and change the course of their martial arts journey. Both of these senior teachers described the training up in the mountains as special. There was no way I was going to miss it.

Mount Hotham and the smoky blue ranges that roll away from it are picturesque in all directions. Standing on the vast ridges, you can feel the depth of the valleys gently pulling on you. The days were bright and blue, and the nights cold and clear.

We stayed at Eiger Lodge, which is perched on the edge of a ridge. It is warm and spacious, with a balance of rustic charm and modern conveniences. The wooden ceilings hang airily above the multi-levelled living spaces, that each have suites of comfortable couches and chairs. There is a broad swathe of windows with views across the mountain ranges.

The food was delicious and abundant. Our chefs, Julie Boydell and Diana Hope, were passionate about every detail of every meal. I was not at all surprised to discover that Diana had competed on *Master Chef*. It was touching that so much attention was paid to our daily meals, to make them affordable and yet luxurious.

After dinner the lodge was filled with swirling chatter, punctuated by bursts of laughter. Aikido students tend to be intelligent, curious and witty people. If the engaging conversation were not enough, we were treated to live music from John Watson Sensei and his wife Jane. Being warm, well-fed,

entertained and slightly tipsy after a day of Aikido training... priceless.

We had three or four training sessions per day, each at a different site around Mount Hotham – and each class was taught by a different senior instructor. Every single class was unique, and every single class was fun and hugely informative. It is beyond the scope of this little article to cover the material in each class, so I will describe the experiences common to all of them. The first that comes to mind is the odd sensation of being in a gi and wearing hiking boots. Students in their white training uniforms do not necessarily look out of place among the dry tussocks of a mountain slope ...but add the hiking boots, sunglasses, sunscreen and hats to those students, and they do start to look a little comical. The farce is completed however, once they start to move. With the grace of an intoxicated, pregnant camel, I slid on the gravel, tripped over tussocks of grass, fell into random depressions and leaped over twisted shrubs – all the while, trying to face my training partner as a plausible martial artist, with my wooden bokken or jo held in the correct position at the correct distance. The days were filled with laughter and fresh air, and believe it or not, all students began to improve.

The highlight of the mountain training for me was the meditation at sunrise on the Sunday morning. Far too early for mortal human beings, we put on our gis and car-pooled to near the summit of Mount Hotham. The moon was almost full and glowed coldly above as we trudged carefully up the gravel road to a place just below the summit. We sat amongst the tussocks of grass on bits of cardboard, foam or plastic bags, as some insulation from the cold that seemed to swell up from the depths of the mountain. We were advised that for the full experience, we could take our boots and socks off – I don't recall too many of us taking the suggestion – I know I didn't.

Robert Sensei gave us a brief explanation for the purpose of the meditation. I cannot do justice to all of the beautiful ideas he shared, but a couple of notions resonated with me. The first, was that we were about to experience direct proof that the earth underneath us was moving. What made this basic concept salient, was the vast spread of mountain ranges that rolled away from us into the distance in all directions.



Suddenly, we were to become conscious of the entire Earth, spinning underneath us as we sat on it, moving us and the mountains and everything else, towards the sun. The second notion, was to contemplate the universe from our tiny place within it – even though that tiny place seemed so vast from the top of a mountain range.

Well before the sun rose, the scene was well lit. With the moon behind us, and the rosy promise of dawn in front of us, the ranges could be made out in exquisite detail. In silence we sat, patiently waiting. Well, I say patiently...

The idea of meditation, I have been informed, is to clear your mind of thought – or at least, to watch your thoughts without attachment, until you can focus on just one thing. I focused on the cold I was feeling, and hoped fervently that the sun would rise within a minute or two, so that we could all stand up and applaud or something. *Then* – we would move around a bit, and warm up. Yet the sun seemed to delay. Minutes and minutes of cluttered thought clamoured for my attention, and I started to feel that I was failing the exercise. I simply could not quiet the mental chatter. It reminded me of being in church when I was a boy. I am no longer religious, but I remember from those days the experiences of sacred silence. The meditation felt like such a silence – important, serious, sacred. And then from that very realisation, I suddenly felt the urge to break wind. The thought that the ultimate conclusion of my serious meditation was to focus on *not* farting, cracked me up. Yet of course, I felt deeply inhibited from either laughing or farting. So I sat there, the mirth quivering within me, waiting for the sun to rise.

I had positioned myself behind the entire group, so that I could see what they were doing. Everybody seemed at peace and in serious contemplation. I felt a sudden *bonhomie* towards everybody around me. I am not sure why, but I enjoyed the feeling.

Thankfully, I did manage to reach a more elevated plain of thought just before the sun actually did rise. In hind sight, it seems to me that the sun was waiting for me to grow up a bit, before it would grace us with its warmth and light. It was spectacular – far more so than I had expected. It also rose quicker than I was expecting, and the transformation in the landscape was magnificent. I had the thought that the sun rises every day – that in clear weather, we could experience a sunrise every day – yet how many of us do so? Robert Sensei said to me a few days before the training, that each person that participates in the sunrise meditation, would receive some kind of answer. I did receive an answer in the end:

Awesome beauty is inevitable, and it happens in its own time.



Steve Wright – Bairnsdale Dojo.

The spectacular scenery and mountainous terrain provided a new and challenging perspective on training.

I particularly enjoyed the sunrise meditation session on the summit.

Being a rural student, It was a great chance to make friends with people within Aikikai and a fantastic opportunity to learn from so many shihans!

It's certainly worth attending as it only takes place once every few years.

Highly recommended!



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