

Aikido in Australia

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 6



*Focussing on National Schools
Reports from Tasmania*

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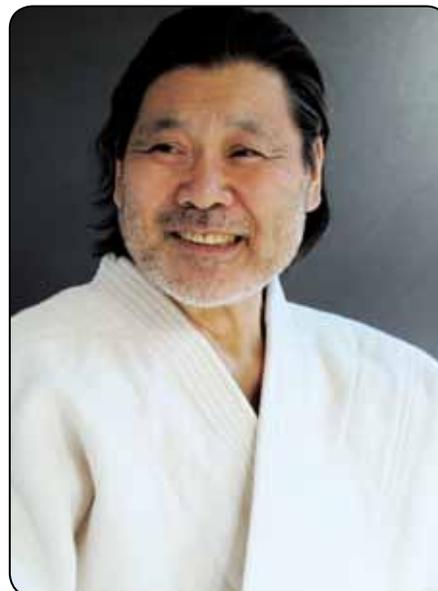
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NEW EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

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.



Dan Promotions January 2016

Shodan:

Bernard Dowd (WA)
Geoff Dugan (Tas)
Chris Jones (Tas)
Dominique Perrotin (Qld)
Bruce Roberts (WA)
Monika Tschochner (WA)

Nidan:

Shravan Bhurtun (Vic)
Greg Giannis (Vic)
Tony Neil (Tas)

Sandan:

David Baker (Tas)
Brad Lane (Vic)

Yondan:

Tristan Derham (WA/Tas)

Godan:

John Litchen (Qld)
Matthew Lo (NSW)
Darren Love (Qld)

Rokudan:

Peter Weston (SA)

Editorial note:

This issue has several perspectives on the Tasmanian Summer School, from recent beginners, as well as some from others who have had longer experience of national schools.

Perhaps you still have some wonderful memories of experiences at national schools down the years -it would be great to hear your stories too so we can publish them from time to time in this magazine.

Photographs from the Summer School in Tasmania are by courtesy of Youz Iqbal, Wyman Yonug, Diana Hope and Suzie Lack. Many more are posted on the Facebook page so please take time to have a look at these wonderful images.

Photos : Waka Sensei, Ueshiba Mitsuteru, p18, by John Litchen.



An Interview with Hanan Janiv Shihan, one of the Trustees of Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation.

by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei

I recently realized that there has been a dearth of material from or about Hanan Janiv Shihan, despite the fact that he is one of the 3 senior members of the TTC and is one of the 3 Trustees of Sugano Sensei's Foundation, appointed under Sensei's will. The reason for this is partly because he is a naturally modest person, generally of few words, reluctant to "big-note" himself, and who puts into action the precept that the most important parts of Aikido's teaching are unspoken. However he has a very interesting history, and in particular his occasional mentions of his reactions when he first came to Aikido intrigued me greatly. So I used the excuse of needing further material for the newsletter to interview him in order to find out more - and so as to share some of this intriguing history with the wider body of trainees. I found what emerged a fascinating picture of the very physical form of training in the early days of Sensei's teaching in Sydney - a much rawer and more physical type of training in those early days - very much a reflection of the make-up of the vast majority of the young gung-ho trainees at the time. It's also an interesting insight into how someone with diverse martial arts experience coming to Aikido perceived and experienced the training in those early days.



You have said that when you first saw Sensei, you immediately started Aikido. But at the same time you have said that for some time you were in some ways sceptical about Aikido. How can this be reconciled?

Before I started Aikido I had 5 or 6 years of martial arts experience. I started Judo at the age of 14 and received a letter that I could be admitted to the Kodokan as an uchi-deshi but my family wouldn't let me go. I then moved into jiu-jitsu, then into karate. All my energy as a youth and young man went into these other martial arts, training 5 or 6 times per week and in both cases with judo and karate, I competed at a national level. So I didn't come to Aikido as a raw beginner martial artist. When I was starting aikido, I found certain perceived deficiencies in Aikido at that time, in that I thought that Aikido was making claims it couldn't live up to. This was really to do with the practitioners I encountered, not the technique. My mentality at the time was such that I felt I could have got the better of everyone else I encountered except Sensei – there was certainly no way I could overcome Sensei, of course. The reality was that the first night I started, I got punched because I countered my training partner's move. I came from competitive arts and so I took the opportunity to counter and in those days things got heated much more often. Once I got so angry that I sat on top of my training partner and threatened to punch him in the face - Sensei saw this and on these occasions he would smile or shake his head, and just walk away from us. We knew how he felt about it

Was there a difference between when he smiled and shook his head?

I could see he could understand that things could get heated on the mat - people would clash in those days and techniques might get countered and someone might be slammed onto the mat. This was because people often were not doing what they were told, but this was part of the learning process. I think that Sensei was very aware of the different dynamics

that took place - and he would often shake his head to indicate that what occurred wasn't welcome when I watched his reaction. When I started, I once really tried to test him but his instant reaction so shook me up that I remember seeing stars – he never explained but it was probably because I was getting much too cocky at the time.

Was there any particular way that Sensei dealt with students who fought each other or injured each other?

Sometime he was hard on them physically so as to show how unhappy he was, and sometimes he might have also talked to them afterward where it was necessary. When it did happen, he sometimes raised his voice, and we hated his open disapproval. So it was the case when Sensei got angry with me for getting too cocky. Sensei could deal with things in a physical manner, or otherwise in a silent manner, not saying anything, and would ignore you and not speak to you. Both were very powerful teaching tools.

Do you think you have done the same over time in the role of the teacher?

Yes sometimes I reacted in the same ways. While you are a keen student, that makes you very responsive to your teacher and any acknowledgement or lack of acknowledgement is a very important part of the feedback. Sensei dealt with everyone in a personalised manner which I thought was appropriate and effective. Once I had a student who came from another Aikido dojo and he spoke to me in a very demeaning manner in front of the class, and I physically made it clear to him in the same way as I believe Sensei would have done and then left him there to wonder about it. He immediately apologised: everyone saw the context and it immediately changed his behaviour; this sort of approach is only used when it's really necessary.

When you started Aikido, you had no doubt about



*Images from Summer School in
Launceston, Tasmania. (2016)*

Sensei's ability, but you had some sorts of doubts nonetheless. Can you expand on that?

We trained in only the basics for many years, doing 1 to 3 techniques per class. We constantly waited to see what would come next, but it never seemed to come! For a long time we just repeated the syllabus over and over again. I suspect that it was because Sensei was quite isolated and thus had to repeatedly start many new batches of beginners from scratch. Eventually the group which I was in became what I call the hard core group around Sensei - this the group which constantly trained more than 3 times per week with Sensei. In the group that had started just before me was a group including David Brown and those in the group were going for their first dan and I was allowed to train with them as part of their group - I had a special dispensation as I already knew how to fall. At that time there were other dan grades in other parts of Australia; there was one older guy called Cyril in Sydney who was an architect, and another trainee Dave Armstrong who had trained under Chiba Sensei.

Did you have any other misgivings?

I also had misgivings about big claims that were being made at the time that with Aikido you can do this and you can do that, but the fact was that most people couldn't actually do what was claimed. My background was that I came from competitive martial arts, and that background allowed me to see it from the context of competitive arts and also from a combat perspective.

How did Sensei participate in the class?

When I first started Sensei would join in during the middle of the class and take part in the jiyu waza, getting thrown and then taking his turn to throw others. Occasionally he took an individual aside and trained individually with them for a while; I think this was to give them a feeling for the particular technique. We all used to go for a drink after training after every class, and on Fridays Sensei would join us for a drink, and was part of the group.

Were there any special classes conducted by Sensei?

Advanced classes were created to allow people to prepare for dan grades. I think Sensei would have been very frustrated for many years by the large number of people who didn't continue their training - and he kept on having to teach endless numbers of beginner groups. When I got there, there weren't many who had trained for more than 2 years prior to me. Even then some of those people would come irregularly, but gradually a core group emerged of keen trainees which I was part of. The training in those classes was a little more in-

tense and continuous, and this was different from the mixed group which was made up of people of so many different abilities. That class lasted for a couple of years, and this was important for the development of those in this core group.

When did you first travel with Sensei?

Almost straight way I travelled with Sensei to Summer School in Melbourne - which was when I first met Tony and his parents at their place where we stayed in Eltham. There was a handful of people from Sydney who came down who used to sleep in the car on the way down. I have a clear memory of once travelling with Roger Savage who had an uncle down on the south coast where we stayed on the way down to Melbourne. The Summer Schools gave us lots of intensity and were very social events. They were mainly held at Monash Uni - it was only a small dojo - in those days there only a few dozen people there, and it's where I met people who are still training today like Mike Bennetts, Ray Oldman and Bob Hill, who is now in the UK, as well as others who are no longer with us, such John van Roussel, who ended up training well into his 70's.

When did you first travel with Sensei overseas?

We went to Japan much later, possibly in the 1980's to the IAF. In fact Sensei specifically discouraged us from going to Japan, and he said this was since the training was better here. I had wanted to go to Japan much earlier, but I didn't go as he discouraged us. What I believe he meant was that we were much better off with one good teacher here rather than following many different teachers in Japan. So on the whole, we did follow Sensei's suggestion, but some did go to Japan to train, like Keith Townsend who by then had already been graded to shodan with Tony.

What about ukemi training? Did Sensei ever do that?

Sensei rarely showed how to do ukemi. Sensei himself had developed his own unique form of ukemi. Sensei seemed to believe that you had to adapt to ukemi naturally rather than being taught about it, although he occasionally showed some basic forms of ukemi in class - he always rolled palms up so as to be able to hold a weapon, starting in a low position and then getting higher gradually.

Would you like to say anything in summary about your experiences as described?

In essence, it's really all about being there that really matters, and not just about being there as uke and tori. It's more than being just about the energy, or about giving, absorbing, or trying to understand; it's too complex even to describe.

The truncated form of this interview is a reflection of the subject of this interview - someone who provides fascinating glimpses of various subjects without, as it were, following every rabbit down its burrow, however it then becomes to some extent a teaser, inviting further thought, reflection and inquiry as to what was said, what it really means, and how it reflects on and contrasts with the much more complex and developed situation we find in our dojos today. It's a great example of how those who have been training for a long time can be a wonderful resource not only of anecdotes and historical detail, but also of reflections that give us many opportunities to think about our own training today, how others might see it coming from other martial arts, and how it might or might not differ today from what existed in the early days. Andrew Dziedzic.

Beverley Webster, San Dan –
Recognition of a Woman Achieving Great Things in her 3rd age.

By Linda Godfrey, Area Rep Victoria

Beverley Webster epitomises what a woman can achieve in the in the 3rd age of her life. Beverley commenced aikido when she was in her early 50s at Japan Seminar House, under Robert Botterill Sensei. To say that either of them quite knew what they were getting into would be an understatement. Both had never really encountered personalities and styles of each other. It would also suffice to say that over the course of time, both have joined the mutual admiration club of each other.

Beverley did not have an easy path to attaining her Shodan. A testament to her spirit was that despite fitting the criteria (over 60 years old) for progressing to shodan via recommendation her response was 'over my dead body'.

The number of women participating in aikido is not high and yet for some reason Beverley's Nidan was an all ladies event. Whilst the others were considerably younger and were able to move more fluidly for knee techniques, Beverley's weapon proficiency was a sight to behold. It was only fitting that Beverley was recommended to the grade of Sandan in 2014, this being achieved as she progressed into the next decade of her life.

In addition to her training, Beverley has contributed enormously to the organisation at a dojo, State and National level. She was the Summer School organiser for 4 years. She ran the Commemorative School after the passing of Sugano Sensei, this school prior to the 50th anniversary school was one of our biggest schools and involved considerable participation from Australian and overseas attendees. She was National Secretary for 5 years for the organisation.

Unfortunately injuries now prevent Beverley from being an active participant on the mat in the dojo. Whilst she would love to still be training the time has come where the risk to her physical wellbeing outweighs the benefit. However, her desire to remain connected and contributing remains undiminished. It is for this reason that the organisation has seen fit at a National level to recognise her contribution and grant her the first ever honorary life membership. In addition the organisation at a Victorian State level seeks to enshrine the values that she espouses and epitomises namely perseverance and commitment by the establishment of the annual summer school 'Webster bursary' that will pay the training fees of a student. The bursary will be awarded preferably to a woman and in the absence of a suitable woman to a student over the age of 50.



Tony Smibert Shihan presenting Beverley Webster with the first ever Honorary Life Membership.



Reports and interview by Simone Robinson

A Fresh Perspective



The recent Aikido summer school saw students from all ages and stages connecting in a week-long training event. While many of the students were seasoned aikidoka, there were some newcomers in the mix.

“I’d trained for less than two months before joining the Summer School.” Laughs Shiralee Grimson, from Launceston dojo, “But really, it was fun to see so many people from so many walks of life, ages and stages all training together.”

When asked if she would recommend the event to other newcomers, Shiralee didn’t hesitate, “I really, honestly do. It can be really intimidating, with so many experienced people, but I found everyone to be kind, supportive and gentle. Summer school is so fast paced, but everyone was happy to slow things down, even when I made a mistake. Everyone I met was happy to explain!” This characteristic is part of what allows the growth of fresh perspective and new students during large training events, spurring the enthusiasm shared by everyone in Aiki-Kai.

Like many others, Shiralee is eager to participate again, and hopes the Summer School will come to Tasmania more regularly, “We have so many beautiful dojos in Tasmania, and so many exceptional Sensei, we’re spoilt rotten. It would be wonderful to have people visit more often, and experience it.”



For those thinking of starting martial arts, the choice can be quite overwhelming. Shiralee however, is confident in her choice, “I’m biased, but I think Aikido is the best martial art. It’s the way of harmony, it brings peace, and joy. Anyone thinking of trying it should, because everyone is just so helpful and kind. Summer School is just an extension of that, everyone coming together and moving in harmony. And if you go and you’re new?” Shiralee laughs and points to her cropped hairdo, “Look for the gal with the flaming red hair, I’ll be there to help, just like everyone else.”

From those who have just started, to those who have been training for years, the spirit of Aikido extends to all in the Aiki-Kai family, making the 2016 Tasmanian Summer School a rousing success.

Interview with Shiralee Grimson

The 2016 Tasmanian Summer School saw over 130 people from all walks of life and stages of training, come together in an inspiring event. While many of those in attendance had been training for years, Shiralee Grimson had been training a mere two months before joining the Summer School in January. When interviewed, she had only positive things to say about her experience.

You recently attended your first Aikido Summer School, the first time in almost 10 years since it has been to Australia- How would you describe your experience?

Shiralee: A real eye opener. It was fun to see so many people from so many walks of life, different ages and stages all training together. Aikido is so welcoming, there’s no competition, and everyone was so helpful and friendly that I learnt a lot, got lots of great tips that have really helped. Most of all it was great fun and I made some good friends from all over Australia.

Did any classes or tips really stand out in your memory of the school?

Shiralee: There’s too many to list! The bokken training was super helpful, as was the Jo training, as I’d only held a Jo a few times in my life! But I guess the biggest tip that stands out in my mind is something Kubota Sensei said, and as a newcomer, it’s really settled my fears. I think every beginner has a fear of doing something wrong and getting hurt, or hurting others, we walk into the dojo feeling doubtful about ourselves and our abilities. But as Kabuto Sensei said, this

is Aikido, the way of harmony. We work with everyone, we learn to defend, to step aside, to walk away if necessary. Aikido's motto is to "Respect our elders and take care of our juniors." That's not to say that we're not learning a serious martial art; because we are, we are learning the ways of the samurai, but we learn it in a way that should not breed fear when we walk into the dojo, it should bring peace and harmony, because that is the Aikido way.

How has the summer school influenced how you plan to continue your Aikido studies in the future?

Shiralee: It's opened my eyes up in many ways, it's made me see that there's no limitations when it comes to Aikido, regardless of who you are or how old you are, you can practice Aikido. I got so many positive comments and encouragement from people all around Australia who trained with me and want to see me grow. It's one of the lessons Tony Smibert Sensei taught us. Everyone in Aikido is a plant, and together we make a forest. Those before us have grown strong and shelter the newer (but not necessarily younger!) plants growing up. Unlike other martial arts, we all grow to our potential, not to a set code, so we may be a tall redwood, or stay a tiny seed! With everyone at Summer School building me up and helping me, I'm really excited to see just how far I can go. One day I'll be an eighth Dan, giving lessons at a future Tasmanian Summer School!

Do you think attending a summer school so early in your aikido practice would be something you would recommend to other newcomers?

Shiralee: I really, honestly do. It can be really intimidating, with so many experienced people, who have been practicing

for decades, but I found everyone to be kind, supportive and gentle. They helped me participate in everything, even when I didn't know what I was doing. Summer school is so fast paced, but everyone was happy to slow things down so I could learn or finish a move, and even when I made a mistake; and I made plenty, everyone I met was happy to explain. There's a lot of laughs at Summer School, and a lot of fun times to be had. It's intimidating, but remember, everyone's equal on the mat. I had many Dans tell me they loved practicing with me, because I was new, and my unpredictability was a wonderful challenge!

Would you like to see the Summer School held more often in Tasmania?

Shiralee: I would, because crossing the Tasman's expensive! Besides that, we have so many beautiful dojos in Tasmania, and so many exceptional Sensei, we're spoiled rotten. It would be wonderful to have people visit it more often, and experience it. We have Tony Smibert Sensei and Tenchi farm ... who wouldn't want to have that more often?

Do you have any closing thoughts about the Summer School, or the practice of Aikido?

Shiralee: I'm biased, but I think Aikido is the best martial art. It's the way of harmony, it brings peace, and joy. It's fantastic exercise for all ages and stages, and anyone thinking of trying it should, because everyone is just so helpful and kind. Summer School is just an extension of that, everyone coming together and moving in harmony, so if you get a chance, don't doubt, just go. And if you go and you're new? Look for the gal with the flaming red hair, I'll be there to help, just like everyone else.

A lasting impact

The 2016 Summer School may have drawn to a close, but the impact it has made continues to spread through the Aikido community.

Martin-Sensei of Tenchi Farm Dojo, Tasmania, describes the recent summer school as a joyful, intense experience. "The big thing for me is that... belonging to a bigger family. The experience of belonging to the aikido family." He emphasises that the value of the summer school lies in this sense of connection, "I made a connection to so many people from Australia, and I really appreciate that. That's a big one for me."

When asked about upcoming Summer Schools, and the Extension that was run at Tenchi Farm, he takes a moment to think, "The thing is, I'm still in the process of digesting this summer school." Martin laughs, "It was busy."

He states that, while we must recover and enjoy the memory of the school, such a special opportunity should not be passed up. Using the energy and powerful momentum created by the Tasmanian Summer School, promotional work should be done to involve more of the Tasmanian youth in Aikido.

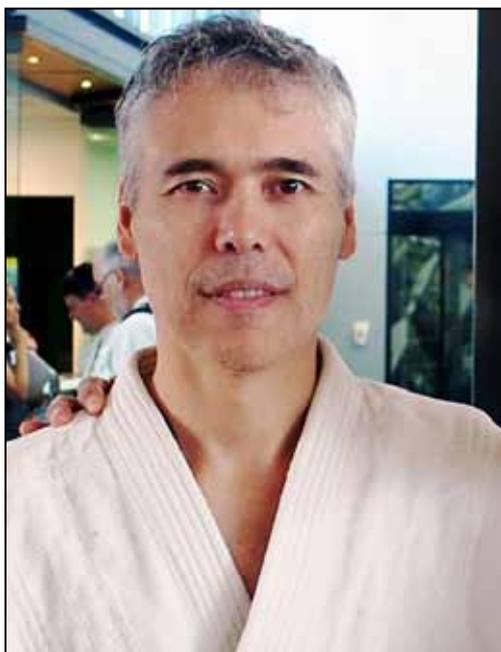
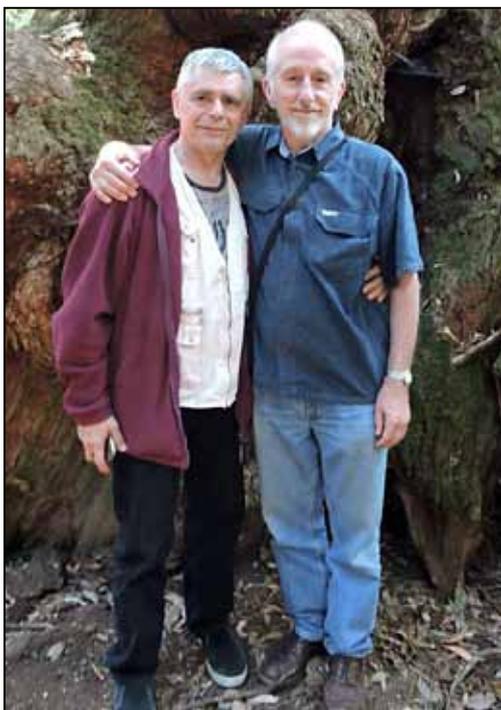
Not only involved in organisation and promotion, Martin is a man who is quite skilled at caring for Aikido weaponry. He recently received one of the two oldest bokken of Sugano Sensei, "It is very special. I feel very honoured and privileged" Age had left the bokken slightly bent, but with the use of two sandstone bricks and the weight of a traditional bell, Martin has gradually and gently straightened it once more.

It is this sort of care that Martin extends to his training and his personal weapons, stating that "A big thing is to glide your weapons through the palms of your hands." In order to build connection with your weapons. Martin notes that, "Our energy flows from our palms."

It is this sort of attention to detail that helped create the beautiful dojo and space of Tenchi Farm, and helped to make both the Summer School, and Extension, such a positive experience for all involved. With a bit of luck, this positive energy will be harnessed to grow the Aikido family and make a lasting impact.

Aikido Summer School 2016

by David Claridge and Simone Robinson



Around 150 aikido enthusiasts embarked on a journey across the Tasman to participate in the 2016 Summer School in Launceston, Tasmania.

The six-day training experience saw people of all levels come together to practice aikido in its various forms.

Kubota Shihan from Osaka in Japan was guest of honour to impart his knowledge from his lifelong study of aikido.

Tony Smibert Shihan was impressed by the turn out at this year's Summer School.

"This was a very important Summer School for us and great to see so many come," Tony said.

"It was a reminder of the strong connection between people from all over Australia to see so many here in Tassie."

"What we also saw was a strong presence of young people, and for an organisation with as long a history as ours it's very important that young people are interested in it," he said.

Tasmanian Coordinator for Summer School 2016 Bodhi McSweeney worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the event possible.

"We started in May with our first meeting and continued with organising throughout the year. The last few months were busy," Bodhi said.

"Victoria do a great job every year which is a very big undertaking and appreciated by all, so it was good to give them a break and a great opportunity for us as a State to be involved with a National event and host this year."

"I am so pleased that everything worked out so well. The feedback has been positive and obviously people enjoyed themselves."

Shihan Louis van Thieghem, 6th Dan from Belgium has now visited Tasmania three times.

"The first Summer School I attended in Australia was the 40th anniversary, so because I now come to most of them I've been to quite a few by now, including Tasmania," he said.

"We have a similar kind of event in Belgium established by Sugano Sensei."

"The level of the environment in Tasmania is really exceptional."

"I keep coming back to recharge my batteries, it is very important for me to keep coming back to keep in contact with people like Robert, Hanan and Tony, because I'm a continuing senior student of Sugano Sensei in Belgium," he said.

Annsophie from Sweden came to Tasmania for the first time to be a part of Summer School.

"My husband Colin and I come to Australia's Summer School from Sweden every year," she said.

"You always learn something new, and it's very nice to meet the people. I'm pleased that people remember my name when I return."

"I think it's also great to come out from Melbourne sometimes. Aikido is a martial art, but also a very social thing from my experience."

"Everyone I have met here is fantastic," she said.

Jikou Sugano Sensei, 5th Dan based in Sydney shared his thoughts about Summer School being in a different location.

"I enjoy it as a contrast, locations have their own character. It's also a chance for some people who don't come very often to meet and train with them," he said.

"I think it broadens the connection, if you are not always in the one place I think it brings an agility, not just physically but socially."

"So I think that's one of the big things (about a different setting) - like a stimulation by contrast," he said.

Summing up, Tony says, “Summer School is really important because it connects us to our heritage and each other, and builds the future. That’s why it was so terrific to see this one a big success and a credit to the folk here in Tassie – who I thank on behalf of us all. But they’re all aware of the work that the people in Melbourne do each year. So we’re hoping they got to have a great time, great training and a rest!”



A brief history of Summer School

by David Claridge

The Aiki-Kai Australia Summer School has come a long way from its origins as a summer program held at Monash University around 1970.

One of the founders of the first Summer School, Tony Smibert Shihan, reflects on how it came about.

“It started as a University programme, but quickly became something which had its own life, that we ran ourselves and we’ve been running it ever since.” Tony said.

“Summer School rapidly became an important part of the Aikido calendar because Sugano Sensei believed so strongly in the idea of people from all over the country meeting to train together in good fellowship and to study hard.”

“And then it evolved into two schools, a summer and a winter school, with summer school being a big event in a big city and winter school being much more an informal event with people getting a chance to share their experiences and study more closely with Sensei.”

Over the years this Summer School has been held across Australia, although mostly in Melbourne where there is the largest population of trainees. Tasmania has now held three Summer Schools, but Melbourne continues to carry most of the burden and their regular efforts make this important tradition an annual certainty.

“Here, in Tassie, it was because of (the late) Peter Yost

Sensei’s efforts and those of his wife Lorna that the state organisation not only came into being but also started to grow and then maintain its continuous growth so that others like me could make a contribution.” Tony said.

Peter’s widow, Lorna, has been described as someone who represents the countless partners who support people involved in aikido especially during the Summer Schools.

“Peter was so taken up by an aikido demonstration that he went to Melbourne and there, found out about Sugano Sensei’s arrival in Sydney before inviting him back to Tasmania, and that’s how it all started here.” Lorna said.

“The seminars back then were wonderful, and when they were training in Tasmania up to ten people would stay at our place, they were terrific weekends.”

“I was just the one in the background, but I would help as much as I could, because anything Peter did I would take quite an interest in, and it was a pleasure to help them and to see it get on so well.”

Lorna was a special guest at the formal dinner during Summer School 2016 where she was thanked with a certificate from the Sugano Foundation. (By happy chance, her grandson was manager at the restaurant that night, so her celebrity within Aikido circles WILL get back to the Yost family!)

The recent Tasmanian Summer School could not have been made possible without the help of the registrar team. One of these team members was Annalise Bennet, a Second Dan from Tasmania, who worked tirelessly to make the event a success. She talks about what went into the Summer School Administration, and her views on the event.

Maintaining the Community Heart – a Registrar’s Perspective

Simone Robinson speaks with Annalise Bennet

As part of the registration team, you had a unique perspective on the Aikido Summer School. What would you say your experience of summer school has been this year from both a personal and professional perspective?

My love for aikido national schools has grown with each one that I attend, this year was no exception. This year I got to see the background machine of the school from a rather intimate perspective, and my respect has grown even greater. So much goes into creating these fabulous events for the Australian Aiki-Kai family.

I can liken my experience participating in this school’s registrations to an aikido grading. Each grading is a journey, containing challenging moments, and joyful moments. It will stretch you to the end of your comfort zone (and sometimes beyond!), but leave you with a feeling of achievement, pride and sense of community like never before.

A lot of work went into the registration- what would you say was the most challenging part of preparing for the Tasmanian Summer School?

The most challenging part for me was making sure I could give enough time to the organisation. I have an active and busy lifestyle already, so I really had to step up my commitment and time management to get through this. On the flip side, the most enjoyable part for me was getting to know even more Australian aikidoka, and reconnecting with old friends,

Although there were many, many details that went into planning for the Summer School, what would you say were the key aspects of making the event such a success?

To me, there was one key aspect to make this school a success. Bodhi McSweeney. She was the central pivot and foundation to our whole endeavour - she kept us together, in line, and ready. My sincere thanks go out to her for giving so much of herself to this school. I hope she’s now finally caught up on her sleep!

What do you hope to see happen in future summer schools? Would you like anything to change?

Aiki-kai, and the national schools evolve slightly each year in a natural life progression. Personally, I’m not necessarily interested in hoping for specific things to happen or change, my own joy comes with experiencing the evolution as it continues, wherever it leads. I do obviously hope that we can maintain the community heart of this family, and a strong healthy organisation.



Annalise Bennet

At the Registrar’s table



A Broad Arrow of Direction

Simone Robinson talks to Sharon Stewart, a fifth Dan from Adelaide, talks about what it means to attend a summer school, her personal experiences, and her recommendations on travelling with weapons.

You have attended many Summer schools throughout your practice of Aikido why would you say they are so valuable?

I first heard about Sugano Sensei's National Schools through my teacher, David Scott Sensei. He always encouraged me to make a connection and to have my own experiences in Aikido with Sugano Sensei. My reasons for attending National Schools then, was to train directly under Sugano Sensei, learn through observation and follow his teachings. Being under the direct teaching of Sugano Sensei was most valuable. Sugano Sensei's teaching method always "invited" me. For me, Sugano Sensei provided opportunities for me to follow as closely as I was able, make my own exciting discoveries within and through the beautiful movement of Aikido.

What was your experience like at the recent Tasmanian Summer School?

My experience at the most recent Summer School in Tasmania was a positive one overall. The Aikido training was as always another opportunity to connect, co-operate and collaborate with each other on the mat. While the overall mat proportion was a little unusual due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, we all managed within the space well with special attention and adaptation for group training. This school was different as for the first time, it separated out sessions such as the focus on Bokken and Jo classes in one Dojo while concurrently running "energy" classes in the main Dojo. It was a worthwhile experiment, however not my preferred option but, as an Organisation we are still "feeling our way" since the loss of Sugano Sensei.

As usual I learnt many things about myself. I met many friends I had not seen for a year and made some new. Off the mat, swimming at Cataract Gorge, the Winery Tour, a hilarious Karaoke night, a visit to Tenchi Farm and staying with new friends all added to the experience.

What was your experience in Tasmania and would you return for another summer school?

Tasmania is a beautiful place. I would have liked to see more. I loved what I did see and thanks to the wonderful people who made that possible. The Tasmanian Aikido community were very welcoming and went out of their way to help anyone out that needed assistance or information. Finances would be the only barrier to me attending another Summer School in Tasmania.

During the recent Aikido summer school, you chose to hire weapons- what was the reason for this? (Have you encountered problems with flying them previously, and if so, what?)

There were two reasons I hired weapons. One was the additional cost to transport them basically. Secondary to that was the concern of changing flights from Adelaide to Melbourne then to Tassie and my weapons not arriving with me. But in all the years I have travelled with my weapons they have only been misplaced once.

Would you recommend bringing weapons or hiring (for those just starting out)?

I would recommend people make their own decision about whether or not they bring their own weapons. It's really about how they feel and they can have their own learning experience in regards to this. While it's difficult to make decisions sometimes, it's also very empowering to make our own choices.

Do you have any other tips for those considering flying out to attend a summer school for the first time?

For me, Aiki-kai Aikido National Schools are an opportunity to connect with others who most likely have a similar view somewhere within the "broad arrow of direction" Sugano Sensei spoke of. Finding others with a belief in Aikido is a worthy venture for me. Maybe bring a couple of coat hangers too!



**Fire Alarm at the extension training
by Martin Bratzel, 5th Dan.**

As we often do when there are visitors to Tenchi Farm we went for a walk into the forest to see the big trees. Simon Pearce had not been there, a small group joined in and we were near the giant grandparent trees when Tristan Derham and another Aikido student caught up with us to pass on the message that our area had its danger level upgraded by the fire department. I suggested to upgrade our forest walk as well and explore a bit further up the creek where our water is coming from and everyone was happy to do so even though Tristan was only wearing thongs. "Thank God I changed into my walking thongs," he joked as we started moving.

The light on the walk was totally unusual. The smoke of the Highland fire in the distance was thick in the air at that stage changing the color of the sun into orange or even deep red. It gave the forest this strange feeling like a place that I had never been to before. It created a pattern of light on the forest floor that was beautiful, mesmerizing, but it also had an eerie and foreboding feeling about it.

We walked past the stand of Eucalypt trees to the Rain-forest and climbed towards the little mountain stream and the Pristine Forest that surrounds it. The light felt more benign now as we wandered under the thicker canopy of Myrtle trees and Giant ferns shading us from sun and smoke.

We had been exposed to smoke since we left the Summer School on Saturday and drove back into our valley with the mountains of the Central Plateau, the Great Western Tiers, completely covered by it and invisible. While it did feel a bit scary, we presumed the fire was a fair way off.

On the way back, at the end of the walk Tristan picked up a message from his Dad saying an evacuation order had been issued.

The message hit like a bombshell and I started running. Dave Scott and Bodhi were busy doing something just outside the Dojo looking expectantly in my direction. I yelled out the first words that came into my mind: "Today is a good day to die," addressing the ultimate collective fear with a feeble attempt at humor. There was not much appreciation for

this timely saying of an old Indian Chief when getting up in the morning, but the adrenalin was pumping and it was time to get the facts straight.

I got people to collect empty containers from all over the place and put them around house, Dojo and bathhouse. We filled them with water and put mops and Dojo brooms for spot fires around them. We used bathtubs, a canoe, a dinghy, water troughs and lots of barrels for the water. I remember Tammy filling containers on one side with a hose and Mike Petery using the fire pump to fill the canoe on the other side. We collected materials like clothes and towels for protection and put them near water and put goggles and gas masks and gloves at a central point. I remember Marie looking competent, calm and centered, doing good work while mysteriously smiling as she was taking photos at the same time.

There was a hive of activity as people prepared to leave while putting defenses into place. Maree added the pictures of Sugano Sensei and O'Sensei together with the Tokonoma scroll for safety into the evacuation vehicles. Other important items like passports, insurance papers, bedding and a bowl with fresh fruit were already in there.

Cold ash had been falling all day and as the cars were leaving I became aware of it again. By now there were only two cars left and I drove my van to the cows in the distant paddock to fill their remaining water trough and make sure they were okay. As I sat with the cows and with the friendly bucket reared calves waiting for the trough to fill I realized it was the first time I was alone in a while. I sat cross legged on the ground and the enormity of the situation hit me.

The Dojo was 30 years in the planning, 4 years in the building and now with a strong North westerly wind racing along the slopes the fire could become a blow torch and it could all go up in flames in 5 minutes, along with the house, the bath house and everything else. The feeling that hit me as I sat with those pure and beautiful calves was short and sharp like a dagger in the inside of my belly. The gift I had received from the universe could so easily go up in smoke.

It is possible to put up defenses but the simple fact is that I felt and knew that I was not in control of my destiny and the metaphor has caught up with the fragility of my human existence. Suddenly I felt very much alone, one tiny piece of human real estate surrounded by a vast expanse of empty high country. That feeling of being alone brought with it an unexpected exhilaration, a freedom of fate, a surrendering to the forces of Nature and the great Mystery unburdened by the responsibility and decision making for anyone else.

Sitting with the calves with tears in my eyes I became aware of how much I loved this Dojo in its physical form and even though great teachers were teaching there and wonderful students were practicing, at that moment I saw that I had a relationship with it like no one else had. As with the land, however long or short, I am its caretaker and guardian and my love is unconditional and stronger than any fears I might have.

I drove my old van, a Nissan Nomad, back towards the house and I felt like a modern day nomad myself wandering between dimensions, too dazed to be concerned about the void of existence or bumps in the paddock.

Coming back to the house, to my surprise, some cars were still there and so were Tristan, Dave Scott and Ken Trebilco and just then Bodhi also was returning. I presumed she was safe at Tony's and Carmel's, but here she was. She was in good spirits and said she talked to Steve, a firefighter at the local fire station, who said the evacuation order was premature, there was no immediate danger and to tell Martin to relax and have a beer.

What a relief and what a contrast to the original message of the evacuation order. Not wanting to lose any time we immediately opened some premium Northern Tasmanian beer and drank it on our deck.

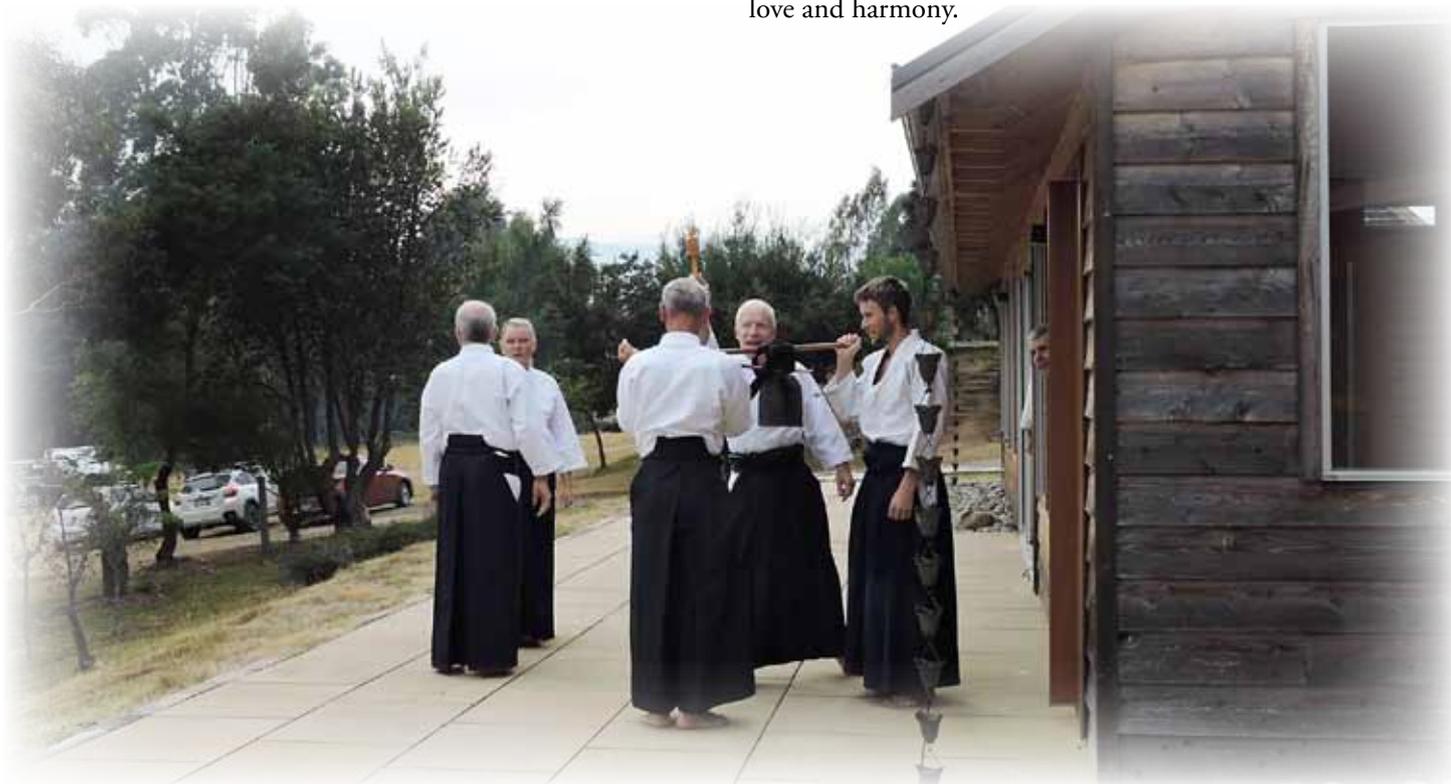
The same people and a few more had been sitting on this very spot, only a few hours earlier looking at Ken Trebilco's impressive collection of East Asian swords and daggers as the

cold ash rained down on us and the sun darkened to a deep red. The weapons were ancient, one authentic from the 13th century. "Only ritual weapons," Ken said as if he was trying to convince himself of their harmless nature while we looked at, touched and held those awesome blades totally corresponding in their deadliness with the display of Nature all around us.

The evening before while sitting in the Sauna with some Aikido friends I must have subconsciously been in tune to this awesome event reciting a silent prayer for the flame of Spirit to be present during the extension training up here on Tenchi Farm.

As suddenly as the threat came it seemed to disappear, but to be on the safe side we kept a watch for embers over the next two nights, (thanks Tristan) and welcomed a tropical down pour of 140 mm of rain over two days a few days later. For me the end of the 2016 Tassie Summer school came with that big rain, washing away nervousness and tension, soothing and purifying and somehow affirming the connection between Aikido and Nature.

There are too many people to thank individually for their dedication, work and open hearts for the school but I do want to acknowledge John Rockstrom and Bodhi McSweeney. What happened at Tenchi Farm was in many ways representative of the whole school; the Aikido community coming together, muddling through trivial and big issues, practicing on the mat, and working together off the mat. In spite of all hurts, misunderstandings, conflicts or shortcomings, the joy on people's faces, their open hearts and love for each other was tangible and plain to see. That was not some wishful thinking in a spiritual self-help manual but an Aikido reality that in my book is part of our planetary obligation to transform and accept conflict, ego and shortcomings, and have trust and faith that positive energy, like all energy, is not lost but enhanced and multiplied and that it contributes to humankind's evolutionary path to oneness, to true peace, love and harmony.



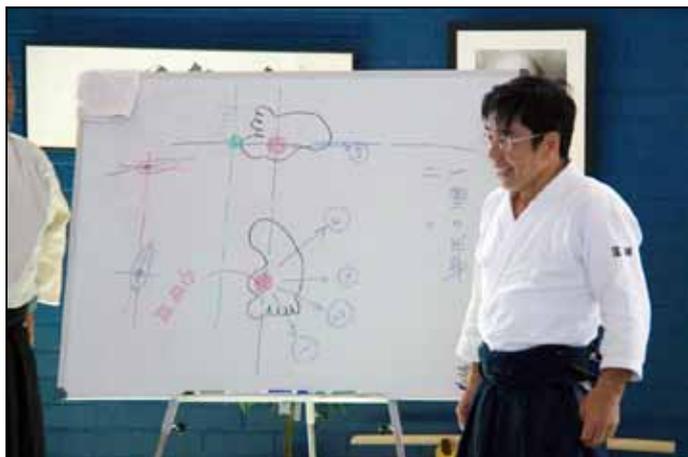
The Importance of National Schools

by Andrew Dzedzic Sensei



After Sugano Sensei had initiated and had held several National Schools in Australia, it became clear that the underlying purposes of the holding of these schools were twofold:

1. Study,
2. Fellowship.



1. Study

Sensei didn't say that study at national schools was for the purpose of studying what he taught – he didn't need to, since he was the main teacher at all of them! However these schools have always provided an opportunity for us to study Aikido in more detail and with greater intensity than what we experience in day-to-day dojo training. Both under Sensei and since, national schools provide a wide variety of classes taught at the highest level, and these always include some weapons classes, for example, as well as instruction from a wide variety of senior teachers, with often fresh or intriguing perspectives as well.

When Sensei turned up at national schools, we all looked forward to seeing what new insights he would bring to us in the form of new techniques, new exercises or completely new slants on familiar concepts. This was in keeping with his view of Aikido as an evolving study. Today we turn up to see how the most senior instructors are themselves developing their study of Aikido and evolving, so the process continues.

Then, with a large variety of people attending, from near beginners to our highest graded instructors, everyone attending has the opportunity to learn not only from the teacher "out the front", but also from whatever higher graded participants they can find as training partners. This is one of the things which distinguishes national schools in Australia from those conducted in many other countries – you are often able to train with some of the highest graded instructors who frequently attend the classes of their peers. You might also be able to train with high graded interstate instructors, who might give you a fresh perspective on something, and

lead you to new insights that you mightn't have heard before – this of course can be not only very interesting but also helpful.

Part of the idea of study is to embark on a detailed examination of aspects of training or techniques which you mightn't have closely looked at before. No matter how long you have been training, there are always more and more things to discover! Often at national schools a more detailed form of instruction is provided, as well as opportunities to train harder and more intensively with high energy. By attending as many classes as possible at national schools, you can get the opportunity to experience all these various aspects of training – and many, many more.

Then, in training with mixed groups of different ranks, or individually with a much more senior student, you also might get the opportunity to be perhaps surprised, or stretched – this might be to experience something that might seem hard to grasp, yet is obviously and patently intriguing and even fascinating. When this occurs, it's great to try to be open to the experience and to try to absorb this experience through your training.



2. Fellowship

One of the great things about attending national schools is that you meet a whole lot of people who share your passion for Aikido. When you are starting out, those who have attended previous schools can help you out, give you advice, and tell you stories to put the whole event into a historical context and help explain what's going on. You could get to hear great anecdotes, and in the process you might reflect on just how much hard work so many have put in over the

years to get to the point they have now reached. You also have your peers – you can share stories and complaints with them about how hard the path to Aikido might seem at times, and seek their view on the sorts of problems we all encounter in our training. For example, a common problem is that there might be long periods when you might feel you are making little progress, only to find out from others that they too have experienced this – and since that it is usually just an illusion – you can come out the other side of this whole experience very positively.

At national schools you also get to meet people from all walks of life, of all different backgrounds and with varying experiences, and often you can enjoy finding out about their often fascinating life stories. Both on and off the mat, you can make new friends, such that you end up really looking forward to renewing these friendships at each national school you attend – as well as perhaps making new ones. For example, if you have trained hard with someone during a school, and learnt from the experience, you are both learning with and from each other in the process; you mightn't even exchange a word while doing so – but by training together, you can be fulfilling O Sensei's vision of Aikido bringing people together in harmony from all over the world. That in itself can provide a bond of gratitude and enjoyment, a great basis for a friendship.



Conclusion

It's only through so many putting in hard, sweaty and challenging years of training at national schools that we have the organization we now have, since it's mainly at these events that we truly exist and grew as a national body. That hard work has built a core of seniors, the most senior of whom are now the most senior instructors. Once you experience training at national schools, you will realize it's very hard work on this road, but that this is indeed part of the process that we willingly take on. At national schools you get a good idea of where this hard work might eventually lead you. Often it's because at these events you've seen the Aikido this amount of study can produce, and so you want to get to something like – or even better than - that level one day.

Through this process, we have built up an extended family network right across Australia – we can walk into any of our dojos across Australia and be welcomed with open arms.

Dan grading tests generally only take place at national schools for many reasons. For one thing, everyone from all over Australia can see for themselves what is required to successfully undertake dan gradings at all levels - and also some of what it's possible to achieve, so as to inspire us all. Everyone who wants to grade has to have attended the required number of national schools partly for this reason – they get to see for themselves not only the standard that is required, but also catch sight of some of what is required beyond the technical. We are all thus sharing an understanding of what is required and potentially gaining some insight into just how much we might be able to achieve in the future.

I didn't hear Sensei explain what was meant by “fellowship”, in the context of national schools. However Sensei perhaps demonstrated its importance and some of what it meant to him by attending all the social activities at national schools and giving students the opportunity to also spend time with him off the mat. He was always willing to dance, to sing and to join in the games that were part and parcel of the social activities during national Schools. We had the opportunity to speak to Sensei, ask him questions and to find out a bit about Sensei's life away from the mat, and where he was teaching overseas.



When we meet together, we feel connected to the organization we have built, to our joint mission to further Sugano Sensei's direction in our training, and we feel connected to each other both personally, and in sharing these common aims. Now as we grow, and as we see how the seniors are growing, we too are inspired and look forward to studying together.

The gift of national schools from Sugano Sensei viewed in this way – becomes the real bond that holds us together as a national organization and as an extended Australian Aikido family.

Instructor Courses at National Schools

*At the recent very successful Summer School in Tasmania, we had a good turn-out of attendees at the Instructor Course held over three late afternoon sessions. **John Watson and Andrew Dziedzic** have devised this Q & A article to introduce the course and to give you some information about it.*

Q. Who is eligible to attend?

A. All trainees who are 1st kyu or above are eligible to attend these courses, and these courses are going to be a regular feature of all National Schools from now on. You don't have to be an instructor or assistant instructor to attend the course – you can attend to find out about what's involved in being an instructor; but it becomes much more important if, for example, you're designated as an emergency back-up instructor in the event of someone else not being able to attend a class. So if you're in a position where you might find yourself called upon to teach, you should definitely attend one of these courses as soon as you can. Even if you have no prospect of instructing soon, you are still very much encouraged to attend the course for a whole host of reasons.

Q. Who runs these courses?

A. John Watson Sensei is the Co-ordinator and usually presents several of the units in the course. However units in the course are also run by some of the most senior instructors in the organization, including the Trustees - who are always keen to make contact with you at these events, so as to personally ensure that all those who instruct, or who might instruct in the future, are equipped with the background knowledge to do so. Of course your training over the years also is a prerequisite, but that is only part of the story.

Q. What is the broad aim of these courses?

A. The course is designed to provide instructors and potential instructors with important information that allows them to instruct. The practical aspect of what to do on the mat, is undertaken through mentoring in your own Area.

Q. What is the content of the courses?

A. The content of the Course is always being reviewed and the emphasis changed to suit those who are present at a particular course. Topics covered in the past have included an overview of the Art of Aikido, usually covered by Tony Smibert Shihan. This covers areas of what is meant by the terms Master/Teacher/student, about the art itself and about the Aiki Kai both as regards the international and national perspective. You also will hear a brief outline of Aiki Kai Australia's place and role in that structure as well as a little of its history, heritage and structure, and about the importance and role of the local instructor. Often Tony Smibert also takes the segment on a typical structure for an Aikido class – not aimed at being prescriptive but rather to provide insights and ideas that might surprise you.

Q. Are there any practically oriented topics about setting up and running dojos?

A. Yes: topics covered include how to set up and run a dojo – supplemented by a dojo set-up check –list (which session is often done by Robert Botterill Shihan); and in addition, there's the important topic of Dojo Safety and health Issues – covered by Hanan Janiv Shihan.

Q. What about legal and insurance aspects?

A. Linking to safety is the issue of Accident Reports and Insurance, usually covered by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei. These sessions (often spread over 2 days) provides you with essential information about our Accident Reporting system, about what we are insured for and for how much – and we explore what it means to be an instructor – in legal terms as to duties and obligations.

Q. Do I have to attend the whole course? I don't want to miss any classes at the national school.

A. Yes! It's really only by attending the whole course that you get a complete picture of what you need to know about being an instructor. As an instructor you need to get "the complete picture" and of course any student showing up at the dojo would expect every instructor to know the whole picture too! An especially important aspect of this picture is about the legal and insurance side of things: you need to know what the instructor's legal duties are to protect the student, how to protect themselves, and how to protect the national and the state organizations. So that means have to attend the entire course - and most importantly the whole legal component of it. Sure it's frustrating that you might have to miss a few

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classes in order to attend the Instructor Course, but unless you attend all the classes, you will probably miss vital information that might expose the student to risk, and which might expose you yourself as well as the local and national organizations to similar risks that could possibly have huge consequences. We want to do the right thing by you – so please make it possible by taking these courses seriously, asking questions, and by getting well and truly involved in the entire process. By being an instructor, you give up the opportunity to train as much - although Sugano Sensei stressed the importance of learning through teaching. In order to be a good teacher, you may well make sacrifices, including all the time you devote to it – although the intangible rewards can be enormous. Missing a few classes at the national school might be the first few small sacrifices you make on the long road to becoming a worthwhile and respected instructor.



Winter School 10-16 July

Narrabeen, Sydney. The three Trustees of Sugano Sensei's heritage plus leading instructors from all over the country meet to train and live with the student body. This is a great event to have one-on-one training with many senior grades. **Peter Goldsbury Sensei, 7th Dan**, from Hiroshima dojo has advised he will be attending

Place this in your diary of events to attend in 2017

Summer School 2017
Special guest Waka Sensei, Ueshiba Mitsuteru
Melbourne 17th - 22nd January, 2017



A National School Perspective

by Tony Smibert Shihan

A SUMMER SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

This Newsletter focusses on the last (Tasmanian) Summer School as a way of illuminating the whole idea of what 'Summer School' is to Aikido in Australia.

Among the most significant elements of Sugano Sensei's vision for summer schools was his determination to bring many of the world's leading instructors to Australia including, over the years: Yamada Sensei, Osawa Kisaburo Sensei, Osawa Hayato Sensei, Masuda Sensei, Sukanuma Sensei, Miyamoto Sensei, Yokota Sensei, Irie Sensei and many others. This meant that we had access to a wonderful range of approaches to thought and training from across the Aikido world even if we weren't travelling overseas ourselves. Aiki Kai Australia has of course, continued this after his passing, most noticeably with two visits by Doshu and including last year with Kubota Sensei as guest of honour in Tasmania. Hopefully we are maturing as Sensei might have wished – not only as individuals, but as an organisation.

KUBOTA SENSEI AT SUMMER SCHOOL

Kubota Shihan's visit was kindly facilitated by Jack Sato Sensei in Perth but actually happened because of Kubota Sensei's own generosity. His encyclopaedic knowledge and skill, along with amazing energy will certainly remain in the minds of many for years to come, so that I was reminded of a much earlier visit of the late Osawa Sensei around 1981(?) when I was in my own early thirties. Osawa Sensei would then have been around 74 years old, just a few years older than Kubota Sensei now and, like him, left many with an indelible picture of what we might all want to be like at that age. I'm guessing that access to Kubota Sensei this year may well have inspired many who now hope to maintain the good health through breathing and regular training that Kubota Sensei so wonderfully epitomises.

NEXT GENERATION INITIATIVE WITH HOMBU AND WAKA SENSEI

Next January's Summer School will also be a 'big one', when we have the honour of hosting a unique 'next generation' event at Summer School with, as Guest of Honour, Waka Sensei (Ueshiba Mitsuteru who is current dojo-cho at Hombu and will, one day, be the next Doshu). This is part of a Hombu and Sugano Foundation initiative which both parties hope will assist our 'next generation' trainees to build their own bridge of friendship and training between Australia and Japan for the future. (Looking back to the early years I can now realise how important my own generation's contacts with the current Doshu were when he was himself, 'Waka Sensei')

Other countries have also expressed interest in attending; Dziedzic Sensei has recently travelled to Japan to confirm the basic arrangements with Doshu and we now look forward to publicising the details of this upcoming initiative as soon as available. The Foundation and TTC also want to thank Victoria for agreeing to take on such an important event so soon after the enormous 50th Anniversary Summer School of last year. This time, however, the numbers will be limited to a maximum of 200 people, so that, working at half the scale, we can again achieve a wonderful school but without exhaustion. The Trustees are also happy to announce a second exciting part of this initiative, which is that Sensei's Foundation will then be assisting a group of students to visit Japan later in 2017 in order to train with Waka Sensei at Hombu. Once again, we'll be widely publicising all details and criteria for those who would like to part of it as soon as we can.

OTHER COURSES

Lots of students will, like me, remember the close camaraderie of training camps, seminars and weekends during the early years of Aikido in Australia. Even what we now know as Aiki Kai Australia's Summer School, began as a small week-long seminar, based at Monash University in Victoria, but where many of students from other states stayed at my family's home in Eltham. Sensei and, occasionally his young family, also stayed there, so that the feeling of all being part of a training family was very strong and strengthened with every year.

The house was big, surrounded by bushland, had a large pool and was somewhere all could rest and socialise after class. Sensei always valued being 'in Nature' as well as together and there were plenty of opportunities for fun as well as resting. Back then he was very happy with the informality that occurred and happy to be asked questions, so you might find yourself discussing technique, principles, or even what OSensei was like late into the night.

Over the years, while our organisation has grown, we've tried to find ways to retain the feeling of those early events, as well as providing the highest of seminar on a big scale, so we're now encouraging students to also take advantage of some special training events that don't necessarily find their way onto the widely publicised national agenda – although you can increasingly find their details on our national website and in the Newsletter.

These include the special *yagai kan geiko* (mid-winter mountain training) established by Sensei over 40 years ago and still continued annually by Aikido NSW and led by Andrew Dziejdzic Sensei. Then there's the triennial *yagai kan geiko* in Victoria, led by Robert Botterill Shihan (coming up in a couple of weeks) and, at the same time, a special live-in course at Tenchi farm dojo in Tasmania which will this year be led by John Rockstrom sensei. Then a week later in Alice Springs, the annual Easter Training run by Mike and Marie Petery Senseis will feature our special guest, world renowned Fukakusa Shihan 8th dan, who is President of Thailand Aikikai. Finally, in Tasmania, the annual Hanami Keiko will again take place in spring (date to be announced later).

All of these very special training events offer aspects of the rural, focussed, live-in training we older students benefited from in the early days PLUS the opportunity to enjoy personal contact with high level instructors in a relaxed 'family' setting. With our focus on technique, we shouldn't forget that Sensei was all about our valuing each other and taking every opportunity to contextualise technical training with the experience of nature in a bigger picture. These special events are every bit as important as the bigger Summer and Winter schools, formal TTC courses and regular local training. I think he'd be very happy with the efforts of so many to keep this very special part of his heritage alive and would encourage everyone to attend, participate and contribute to their ongoing value to us all.

WINTER SCHOOLS

As you may know, Summer AND Winter School are our two most important events in an average year. Sugano Sensei put equal weight on them in terms of his prerequisite criteria for those hoping to take dan ranking, and always held the dan tests during Summer School or Winter School. But I think he always tried to keep Winter School as more intimate event, and more reflective of the characteristics we're now trying to build into the smaller courses. But the big difference from those remains that Winter school is a national event, with an aim to bring students together from all over the country, and where we will continue to bring in international instructors, such as Louis van Thieghem Shihan and others. And of course, our Winter and Summer Schools are where the Trustees, Botterill Shihan, Janiv Shihan and I now focus our teaching on behalf of the Sugano Foundation. This year, our special guest will be Peter Goldsbury Sensei, 7th dan Chairman of the International Aikido Federation and one of the world's leading authorities on the cultural background to Aikido. He is also the former Professor of Philosophy at Hiroshima University and well-remembered here from his last visit when, as well as teaching on the mat he offered a wonderful lecture on the historical side of Aikido. With its focus on the syllabus and the terrific opportunity for those who would like to learn more Aikido's culture from Dr Goldsbury, we think this Winter school promises something special for everyone.

A selection of images from Summer School 2016

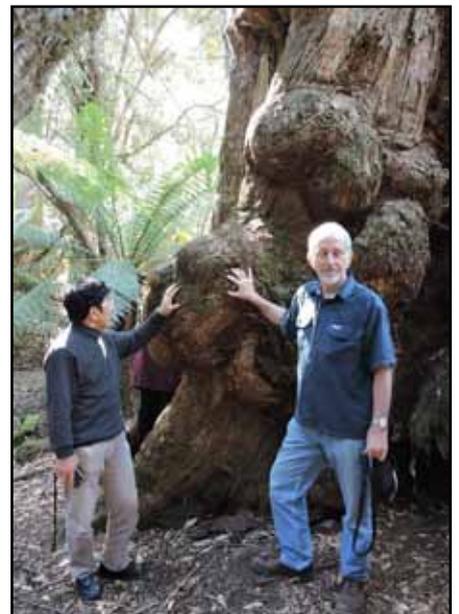


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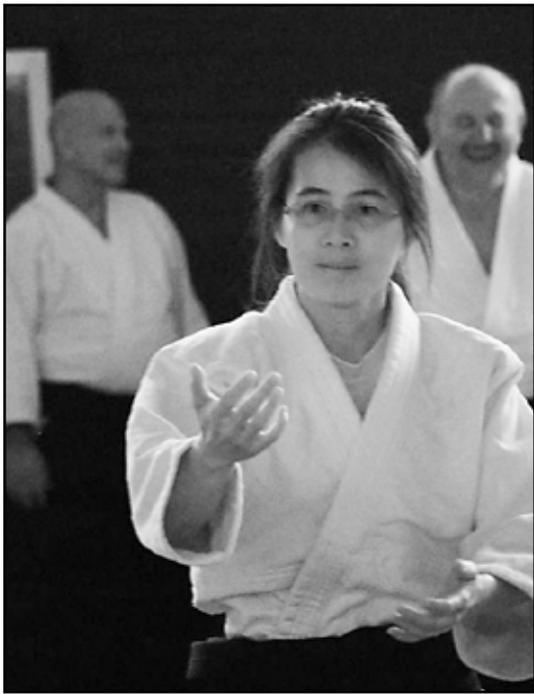


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GUEST OF HONOUR: I. KUBOTA, 8TH DAN, SHIHAN







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