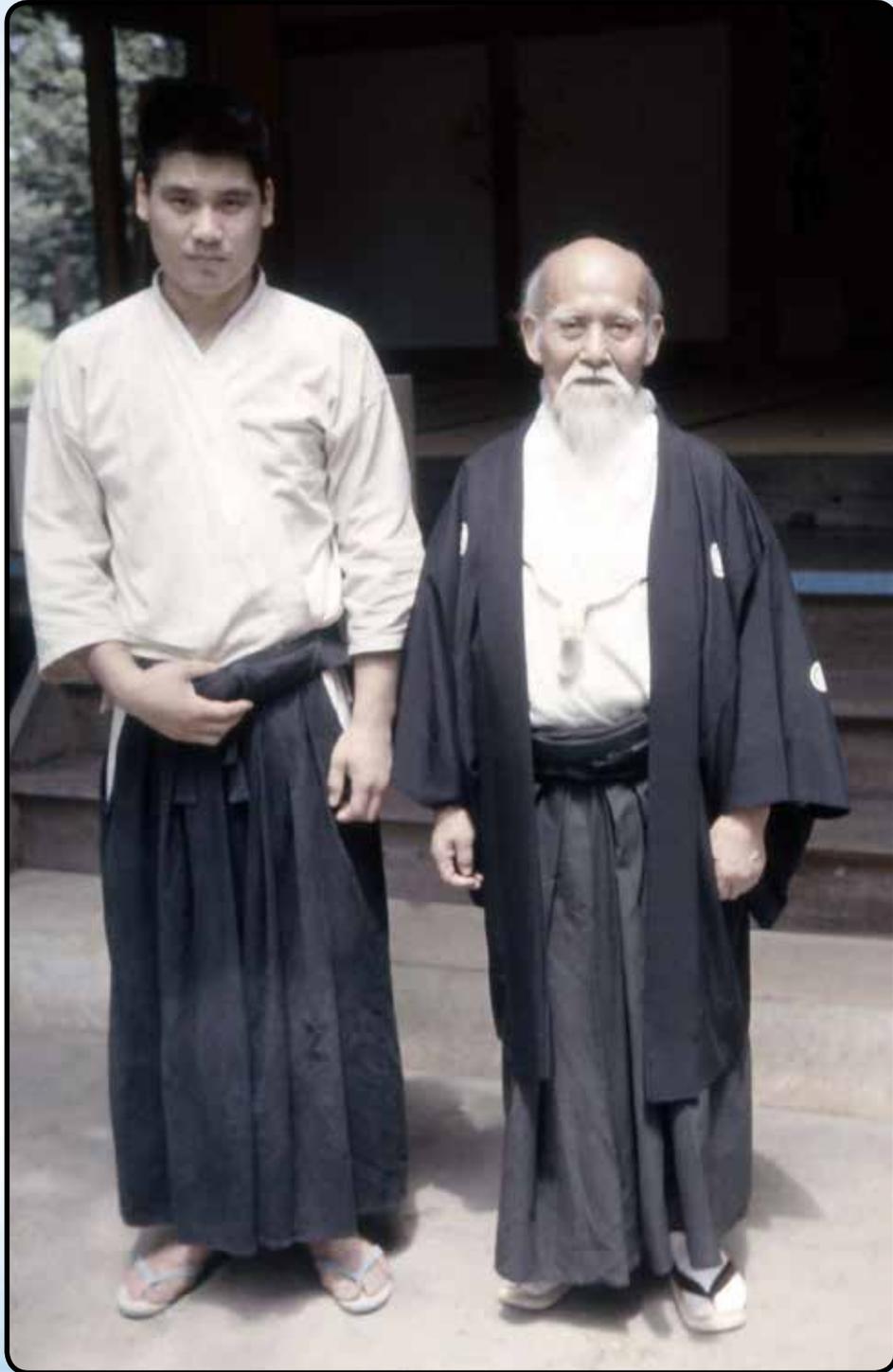


Aikido in Australia
Australia National Newsletter
Volume 5 Number 4



*Aiki Kai Australia's connection with Hombu
Sugano Sensei with OSensei*

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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 Australia's expense.



Summer School 2018 Promotions

Shodan:

Tom Williams	Victoria
Michael Spiteri	Victoria
Trung Le	Victoria
Martin Ha	Victoria
Chris Paine	Victoria
Mastaneh Nazarian	Victoria
Tom Barton	Victoria
Ferran Barbena	Tas/Vic/Catalonia
Mark Read	Victoria
Winnie Zang	South Australia

Nidan:

Lance Wilson	Tasmania
Luke Hope	Victoria
Diana Hope	Victoria
Ben Dowd	West Australia

Sandan:

Sam Penna	Victoria
John Robbins	A.C.T.
Paul Borda	South Australia
Alex Raytsin	Victoria
Hugo Lewis	South Australia

Yondan:

Sharon Stewart	South Australia
Mark Turner	Victoria
Russell Cosby	Queensland
Rae Ming Ong	Queensland

Rokudan:

Martin Bratzel	Tasmania
Ken Tribilco	Tasmania

Winter School 2018 Promotions

Shodan:

Suzie Lack	Queensland
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Nidan:

Frank Brierly	Tasmania
Jerry Ormsby	Queensland
Clifford Coetzee	Queensland
Sean Lee	NSW
Eri Asakawa Atkinson	NSW
Bruce Roberts	West Australia

Sandan:

David Davenport	Victoria
Nancy Ho	NSW
Josh Taaffe	Victoria
Alex Rojas	Victoria

Meeting Suzuki Sensei by Tristan Derham



I first met Suzuki Sensei when he came to Australia for Aiki Kai Australia's 50th Anniversary celebration in 2015. He was acting as otomo for the Doshu and it was clear that his ukemi was highly polished, his movement clean and confident and that he had the trust of the Doshu.

The next time we met was in 2017, when a group of students, led by Jikou Sugano Sensei, visited Hombu dojo for a week of training. Suzuki Sensei's class was obviously popular and, given his dynamic movement, it was easy to see why. He also appeared as the Doshu's first uke in an important demonstration at the Aiki Shrine to commemorate the death of O'Sensei. At that ceremony, the Doshu made a formal speech, centred on the importance of training every day -*mainichi keiko*-a message that struck a chord with me after a week of training at Hombu dojo.

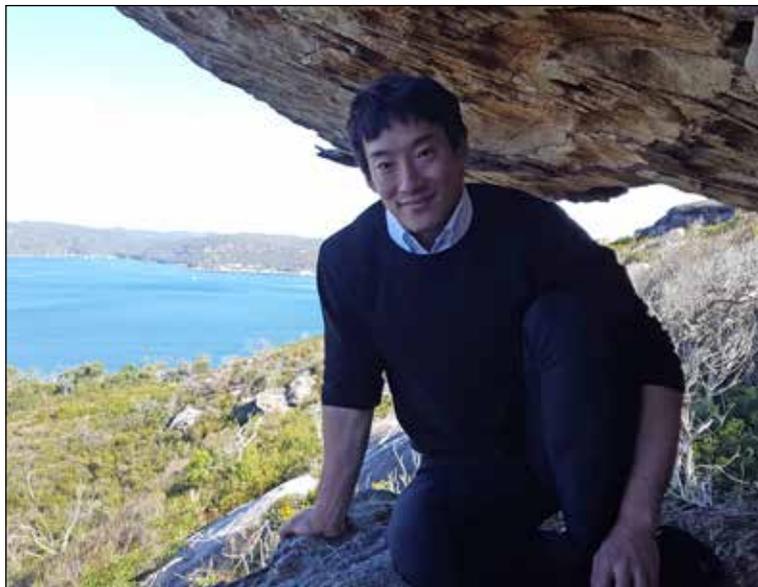
Later that year we extended an invitation to Suzuki Sensei to be the guest instructor at the 2018 Winter School. We were hoping that Sensei's dynamic movement, high-intensity classes and attention to basic technique would be an inspiration for our training. We were not disappointed.

Suzuki Sensei trained some Aikido as a child but began to study more seriously in his late teens. By his early twenties he was training every day and assisting at Hombu dojo. Now in his mid-thirties, the result of years of continuous training is clearly evident. Strong and flexible, he throws his whole body into every technique, staying very low, using as much space as possible, with loose hips and shoulders, closely connected to his partner all the way to the ground. When in classes as a student, Sensei made every effort to follow the teacher's technique, which earned him the respect of our own seniors. In his final class he shared some interesting drills he'd developed for relaxedness and sensitivity. For example, with two part-

ners pulling in opposite directions on one's arms, we practised shifting both of them up and down the mat, keeping a relaxed body. Another drill was somewhat similar to Wing Chun sticking hands practice, maintaining contact with the arms of two attackers, both of whom were trying to touch one's face.

Suzuki Sensei obviously takes great delight in physical training. When he is not teaching one of more than a dozen classes a week, he's hiking or climbing boulders in the Japanese mountains. He insisted on training in every class that was available at our Winter School and with as many people as he could, an attitude of conviviality that he brought with him back to our accommodation, spending evenings with the other students, chatting, joking and talking about Aikido late into the night.

After the week's training, we took Sensei out for a session at a local rock climbing gym, a walk up to the Barrenjoey lighthouse and a swim at Palm Beach, hopefully sending him back to Tokyo with a sense of our warm gratitude. I sincerely hope he'll be back soon.

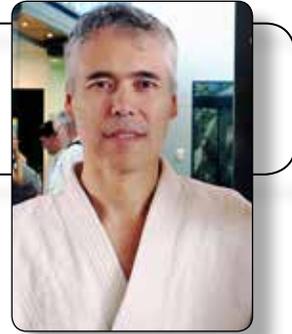




*Jikou Sugano deomonstrating at the World Combat Games
Wyman Young with Phillip Lee Shihan in Singapore
Suzuki Sensei in Sydney for Winter School 2018*



Aiki Kai Australia and its connection to Hombu by Jikou Sugano



Musubi is a Japanese word meaning: knot, union, connection and also associated with creation in the Kojiki.* Additionally musubi is perhaps a suitable word to describe the character and substance of Aiki Kai Australia as its existence is the result of personal connections often over large distances across the country or the world.

However, there was a time in Australia without Aikido, no dojos, teachers or Aiki Kai Australia. In the post war years, very few people in Australia had heard of Aikido, Hombu Dojo or O Sensei.

This would change with the arrival of a young Sugano Sensei who at the time was an instructor at Aikido Hombu dojo in Wakamatsu-cho, Tokyo. Before leaving for Australia O Sensei asked Sugano Sensei to “build a bridge” a “living bridge” connecting Hombu and Australia, ultimately a bridge that would span distance and time.

The newly married Sugano Sensei with wife Verelle set sail from Japan and arrived in Sydney harbor early in 1964. They stepped off their boat docked between Circular Quay and what would become the Sydney Opera House to begin a new life and establish Aikido in Australia. The connection between Hombu dojo and what would grow into Aiki Kai Australia had begun.

From a fledgling studentship it wasn't too long before Australian aikidoka were travelling to Japan inspired to practice at the Hombu dojo and to be taught by the Ueshiba family.

Whether their visit to Hombu was short or long, their experience of the day to day or of something more profound, they developed their personal connection with Hombu.

1984 was Aiki Kai Australia's 20th anniversary and was celebrated with a visit by Kisshomaru Doshu the first member of the Ueshiba family to travel to Australia. During his visit Doshu conducted demonstrations at The Sydney Opera House, The National Stadium Canberra and the National Art Gallery Victoria. Also traveling with Doshu was a Miyamoto Sensei (Otomo) and Suganuma Sensei.

From the late 80's and into the 90's Moriteru Ueshiba traveled to Australia numerous times as Hombu Dojo Cho. Later in 2006 and 2015 he would attend our 40th and 50th anniversary celebrations as Aikido Doshu. Most recently Mitsuteru Ueshiba representing the next generation of the Ueshiba family and current Hombu Dojo Cho was guest of honour at our 2017 Summer School. He was accompanied by Suzuki Sensei and Uchida Sensei also from Hombu.

Since AKA was established we have seen the transition from Dojo Cho to Doshu for two generations of the Ueshiba family with Kisshomaru Ueshiba and then Moriteru Ueshiba.

Most recently in 2016 Mitsuteru Ueshiba became Dojo Cho continuing a Hombu tradition that brings continuity to Hombu and a way to prepare for the future.

Aiki Kai Australia is also looking to the future with a desire to grow and strengthen our relationship with Hombu by cultivating new personal connections while strengthening the ones we have, an endeavour enthusiastically supported by both Doshu and Dojo Cho.

The 2016 AKA Hombu group visit being a successful example (See newsletter Vol 5 #2) it was also instrumental in identifying Suzuki Sensei as an ideal guest instructor for the 2018 Winter School.

Introducing Suzuki Sensei, a young Hombu Shihan to students in Australia, and hosting Winter School in a new venue created an air of renewal, which built upon the strong connection between AKA and Hombu that was established over 50 years ago, and gives us much to look forward to in the years ahead.

* *ancient Japanese text, (Kojiki- Account of ancient matters)*

AKA and Belgium

Similar to Japan, AKA has a long connection with Belgium stretching back decades with students and teachers frequently travelling between the two countries. Next year, 2019, will be the 15th anniversary of the Global Inner Aikido School (GIAS) and as part of a joint AKA GIAS celebration I will be leading a 4-day tour to the sights of Belgium before the GIAS, visiting places like Bruges, Brussels, and Ypres among others. It's important to note, this is not a commercial tour package and participants will need to book their own airfares. However, an itinerary for the tour is being thoughtfully put together by the local organizers in Belgium. Tour dates: 20 to 24 August, GIAS: 25 August to 1 September 2019.

There is a seminar concession of 50% for AKA students attending the 2019 GIAS. Full seminar fee 160€ concession 80€.

Further details for both the tour and the GIAS will be available at Summer School.

New System for Awarding Instructor qualifications

As Aikido rapidly advances to being a major international body with millions of students across the world, it is becoming more and more reliant on having clear and measurable guidelines to obtaining grades and teacher qualifications.

For instance, when we recommend someone for a senior grade to Hombu we are required to complete a detailed form regarding that person, their training history, particularly how often they train and they are looking for a daily practise regime, how much they have contributed to Aikido off the mat, their involvement in the growth of Aikido etc. It is quite a process, not a rubber stamp.

In line with this thinking Hombu is also strengthening the teaching qualifications, broadly structured under the term 'Shidosha system'. The positions in this system are Fuku-shidoin (assistant instructor), Shidoin (instructor), Shihan (master teacher). One could look at these as post-graduate or continuing education qualifications. Japan and a number of other countries have full time Aikido teachers and it is very important the credentials for these people are maintained at a high level. Although Australia doesn't have full time teachers it is equally important we maintain a high standard of instruction, and one that can match anything else in the world.

The term 'Shidoin' was understood to be meant to be able to teach on behalf of the master. In other words, you understood your master's teaching style and philosophy so well you could reasonably pass it on to other people. To achieve this level of understanding one had to have a close connection with their master.

The revised Shidosha guidelines are based very much around this principle of connection. To become a senior teacher you must have a connection with and, ideally, study under a senior teacher. Because of the tyranny of distance in this country, it is not always possible for everyone to regular attend the class of a sempai and the new guidelines have recognised and allowed for this situation. The Shidosha guidelines also match quite closely the dan grading requirements, so for those people who want to become senior teachers within this organisation it's not a huge step to reach that level, but it does require an extra level of commitment.

Starting from January 2019, the Technical and Teaching Committee (TTC) will be phasing in the new system for awarding the Instructor qualifications of Shidoin and Fuku-shidoin. The TTC is bringing into line, along with other national organisations, a system that will reinforce the significance and value of these qualifications.

As a National Organisation with Aikido World Headquarters (Hombu) recognition, Aiki Kai Australia is authorised to issue the above-mentioned Instructor qualifications, while the other highest level, Shihan, is awarded by Hombu itself.

Hombu's regulations define:

- Shidoin as instructors of 4th dan or above
- Fuku-shidoin as instructors of 2nd dan or 3rd dan

An aspect of this system which is used by Hombu itself, but is less well known in Australia, is that the system is based on the idea of a 'teaching stream' in Aikido, which is separate from the 'practitioner stream'. Those in the teaching stream progress through a system that specifically prepares them to be instructors, and recognises their progress through the system as they qualify for different instructor levels. On the other hand, 'practitioners' regardless of their dan ranking never expect to teach. The dan ranking of practitioners recognises their personal achievement in Aikido not their level or preparedness as an instructor to pass on the art of Aikido. At Hombu they are preparing people to be full time instructors. As a not-for-profit organisation, we don't have full time instructors, but the new system is forward thinking, and is particularly aimed at preparing world-standard instructors for the future.

The history of Aiki Kai Australia now goes back more than 50 years and it is expected that instructors who do progress through the new system, will be best placed to maintain and build on this legacy with different levels of instructors being prepared and able to accept increasing levels of responsibilities over time.

In summary there are three main areas for Instructors to develop in:

- (1) to maintain their own study of Aikido and in particular to do this by
- (2) connecting directly with and learning from the Seniors in the organisation

(3) maintaining current knowledge of all the organisational and administrative requirements of being an instructor

Each of these three areas will have some specific requirements to achieve a particular qualification.

As well as regularly teaching a class, the requirements will now include:

- Regularly attending a sempai's (someone more senior than yourself) class, or have a recognised mentoring process in place. (For 6th Dans attendance at a sempai's class is certainly encouraged but not mandatory.)

- Attend a certain number* of State/Territory training events (including 1 TTC Course) per year.
- Attend a certain number of National Schools over the 4-year period of the registration.
- Attend a certain number of Shidosha Courses** which are now being offered at National Schools.
- Attend one or more Instructor Courses or Instructors' Refresher Courses*** over the 4-year period of the current registration. These will also now be offered at National Schools.

*The exact number of events required in each case depends on the qualification. The specific requirements for Fuku-shidoin and Shidoin are available on our website. See www.aikido.org.au > Current Students > Student Resources, and also listed under > About AKA > Official forms.

**Shidosha is a term used to include those having either a Shidoin or Fuku-shidoin qualification. The Trustees of the Sugano Foundation will offer a course for Shidosha at each National School, the form of which is at their discretion. At both the Summer and Winter Schools in 2018, this course has consisted of a class taught by the Trustees as part of the of the usual training schedule. On the timetable the training session was designated as a 'Shidosha Class' but was open to all students to participate in.

***Instructor Courses have been offered by the TTC at National Schools for some years now. The courses have designed for those who wish to become Instructors or who are relatively new to the role of an Instructor. The course deals primarily with the organisational and administrative aspects of being an instructor and does not have an 'on the mat' component. It usually comprises three 1.5-hour sessions held on different days. The TTC will now also begin offering a Refresher Course of about 1-hour, at each National School to help keep Instructors current with any administrative organisational or other changes that Instructors need to be aware of.

In introducing the new system, the TTC recognises that across Australia differences may exist in the opportunities for individuals to train, teach and access senior instructors, because of where they live and further, that personal circumstances may also need to be considered. There is some flexibility in the guidelines of the new system to take such factors into account.

To help implement the new system the TTC has recently formed a 'Shidosha Panel', consisting of one or more Senior aikidoka from each State or Territory. The knowledge these Seniors have of the local circumstances of instructors will enable them to apply the guidelines appropriately. The Panel will be primarily responsible for both monitoring the progress of individuals in the AKA Shidosha system and making recommendations to the TTC as to who has met the requirements for each Instructor Qualification.

The next issue of certificates in January, 2019, will be awarded under the existing system and the certificates will be valid for 2 years. In future certificates will be valid for 4 years with a review every 2 years to help assess the progress towards meeting the requirements of a particular qualification.

Article prepared by John Watson & John Rockstrom



The Foundation

by Austin James



I have been asked to outline what the Sugano Foundation (the Foundation) is, does, and has achieved over the past ten years— in 800 words

I am reminded of Sensei Sugano's answer to the question "what is aikido?" I understand his response was: "that is a big question mark!"

Neither five words nor 10,000 could adequately answer what the Foundation is but, I will do my best...

Nevertheless, the rest of this article will attempt to expand on how the Trustees have developed a structure which draws on the resources of its most senior students, applies a governance regime to ensure its goals are met with appropriate administrative and financial mechanisms, and seeks to provide a forum where those senior people and Area Representatives can maintain communication to achieve the primary Foundation goals.

The Foundation is overseen by three Trustees, who were given the role of providing ongoing direction and guidance by Sugano Shihan in their absolute discretion. Those Trustees are Tony Smibert Shihan 7th Dan, Hanan Janiv Shihan 7th Dan and Robert Botterill Shihan 7th Dan.

Governance oversight and administration to assist the Trustees to achieve the goals of the Foundation is provided by three senior students – Roger Savage Shihan, Andrew Dzedzic and myself, who are appointed directors of the legal entity through which the Foundation operates.

The Trustees have agreed that they will abide by any direction from the Foundation board as to whether any proposed activity is financially feasible or not.

The Trustees consult with a Forum comprising senior dan holders and Area Representatives of Aiki Kai Australia (AKA). The Forum meets semi-annually at national schools.

Aiki Kai members also register as students of the Foundation. The most senior of these students being of the rank of 6th dan and above - are recognised as Fellows of the Foundation, comprising a vast storehouse of knowledge, experience, study and effort contributing to Sugano Sensei's heritage.

Supporting them in their study, connection and teaching are the 5th dans and Area Representatives of Aiki Kai Australia.

The summary below outlines the Foundation's primary achievements since 2010.

We believe these achievements are maintaining Sugano Shihan's heritage and legacy and lay a strong base for developing new generations of students connected to Sugano Shihan:

- The continuation and expansion of AKA's biannual national schools, including the 50th Anniversary through leadership, funding and participation;
- The continuation and expansion of TTC seminars through funding and dispatch of senior instructors.
 - The Trustees have formalised the system of issuing instructor certificates as required under international Hombu regulations. An advisory panel has been appointed with 6th dan

state/territory representatives to look at the criteria for selection of shido-in and fuku shido-in and make recommendations to the TTC.

That panel of senior students from each state/territory has met at national schools and will continue to meet regularly to make recommendations on the issue of shido-in and fuku shido-in appointments to the TTC which will in turn make recommendations to the Trustees.

- Strengthening relationships with Hombu and IAF.
- Building strong connections with international schools which are also part of Sensei's student body, including the provision of teaching by the Trustees, and the inviting of senior instructors to participate in Australian events.
- Ensuring that Sensei's knowledge is not lost through ongoing instruction and development of an archive of Sensei's teaching.

The Foundation funded a film and a book, *Remembering Sensei*, which captured important components of the collected memories of senior students. The film has been shown at several festivals and was warmly received.

Video and other media capturing Sensei demonstrating taijutsu and training points are being collated in an archive, although there are still many issues relating the intellectual property to be addressed.

The *Shin Do Kan DVDs*, featuring Sugano Shihan outlining his sword system was disseminated to all senior students to ensure a ready reference

- The Foundation funded an important contribution to open the discussion of the attitudes towards, and of, women training in aikido and gender equality though the book edited by Linda Godfrey Sensei - *In Conversation with Aikido Women*

The book was launched internationally at the IAF Congress in Takasaki during 2016 and the issue has now become an important matter for consideration by IAF.

- The Foundation is pursuing an initiative to foster closer ties between the upcoming "Next Generation" of students in Aiki Kai Australia and, the future Doshu and Hombu Dojo and its "next generations".

The initiative which saw a number of students from Aiki Kai Australia travel and train at the Hombu in April 2017 was not only of great personal benefit to each participant, and of great future benefit to Aiki Kai Australia, but was very positive in developing new connections with Hombu.

The Foundation continues to pursue many other matters to maintain our connection with Sugano Shihan's aikido and I may have missed many which are important but, I hope that this short overview gives you all some idea of what the Foundation does.

What should Uke do?

by Geoff Freeman



Geoff Freeman training with Sugano Sensei (circa 2000)

This question was asked during dinner one evening at the 2017 Belgian Summer School. I had not given the question much thought before I was asked, so I have since.

Basic aikido practice is commonly a set of known exercises (ikkyo etc.) done by two people, with uke attacking nage. The pattern of training is that nage successfully defends them self and “defeats” uke. Usually we consider our aikido is improving if we get better at the nage part of the exercise.

So, it follows that the role of uke is to help nage improve. How can uke help nage improve?

Firstly, by providing the correct attack. It is beyond the scope of this article to describe attacks in detail, but it should begin with the named attack (e.g. kata tori) and, importantly, should continue in a direction suitable for the technique being practised. For example, a (non-aikido) attacker can use kata tori for a variety of things. The attacker could grab the shoulder so they could push you backwards. They might equally use the grip to pull you forward and down to the ground. Perhaps it is used to hold you still while they punch or kick. Aikido has a response to any of these so, if the technique being practised is a response to being pushed from kata tori, then the “correct” attack is to push after gripping the shoulder. As well as this initial attack uke should be looking for opportunities for follow up attacks. The speed of attack should be appropriate for nage’s ability. Although difficult at slow speeds, uke’s balance should replicate the balance of a fast committed attack.

Of course there is a large variation in athletic ability and experience of students, consequently their ability to offer a correct attack varies enormously. Students new to aikido commonly have no preconceived idea of what movement might be “correct” after the initial part and will usually provide an instinctive and natural response to nage’s movement. A common example is beginners doing a pirouette under their arm with shihonage. This movement may not be the expected (“correct”) response but is it still helping nage? Perhaps not for everyone but for an experienced nage it is an invaluable opportunity to practise responding to natural, possibly unexpected, movement. We get few chances to do this.

Beyond the beginner stage, I see two basic cases. If nage is more familiar with the exercise than I am then, as uke, I try to do the best initial attack that I can at a speed that I think nage can manage. Then I will try to follow nage’s movement looking for a further opportunity for a follow up attack. If nage does well I will, to quote Harvey Koningsberg, “get a nice ride”. I will also get a first hand look at how this nage executes the technique well. If nage seems quite comfortable then I try to offer a more challenging attack, maybe a bit faster, perhaps a bit slower or maybe just change the rhythm. My hope is that I am enabling nage to practise at their maximum capacity.

On the other hand, if nage is not familiar with the exercise, then uke needs to help. As uke I try to attack slowly enough to allow nage time to think and possibly to experiment. Importantly, I try to continue to move to places I believe I would go if I was following an experienced nage, but hopefully slowly enough to give nage time to adjust. My belief is that nage can then follow a correct path and hence learn good movement for the exercise. This usually allows both uke and nage to get useful training with very little verbal explanation.

So, as uke, I start with the intention of helping nage but, in doing so, what benefits are there for me? When I am training with an experienced nage and following their lead I can discover many things. For example, did I lose balance? How did nage manage this? Could I do the same? Could I find an opportunity for kaeshi waza? Also, because I get to train with a variety of partners I get to see a variety of methods and I can compare the effectiveness of each of them. Partners also vary in many ways, for example height and athleticism. If I am a responsive uke I can notice the adjustments which can help me handle such variations. It is also possible to discover things which are not particularly effective.

In short, I find the more I help nage practice the more I discover what is effective as nage. But what to do as nage is a different article.



Attending Aikido Shinju Kai 30th anniversary (ASK30) 6 - 8 April 2018

At 2018 Summer School, Tony Smibert Shihan announced that Philip Lee Shihan of Aikido Shinju Kai in Singapore was holding an International Seminar and Embu to celebrate their 30th Anniversary. Tony asked if any of the Summer School participants were planning to go, so we could give an early indication to Philip Lee Shihan of our attendance.

As many of you know, Philip Lee Shihan has visited Melbourne a number of times and has demonstrated and taught as a special guest at our Aiki Kai Summer Schools. I had been fortunate to practice with him and his sons, Alexander and Aloysius when they were here. I have been lucky enough to visit and practice at the ASK HQ dojo, when I was over in Singapore on a business trip last year. I have been to several classes at ASK HQ. On one of these occasions, Philip Lee Sensei asked me to instruct one of his classes. That was quite an honour.

2018 was going to be a significant year for me, as I had been planning a 3 month trip to Japan to study both Aikido and Taiko (Japanese Drumming). It was a simple decision to add Singapore to the start of the trip.

As expected the online registration process, was simple and quick. However I quickly realized that the International Seminar and Embu were going to be a very big event. It was to be held over 2.5 days – with 10 International Sensei teaching. Leading with Waka Sensei – Mitsuteru Ueshiba, the grandson of O Sensei. The other Shihans were, Philip Lee Shihan, K Shimamoto Shihan Japan, M Fukakusa Shihan Thailand, Ikuhiro Kubota Shihan Japan, Osumu Obata Shihan Canada, Ryuji Shirakawa Shihan Japan, Takeki Tsuboi Shihan Japan, Tony Smibert Shihan Australia, Nobuo Takase Shihan New Zealand, Aziz Belhassane Shihan Belgium and Frank B Sensei UK.

This was going to be a lot of training over a very short time. It was going to be very interesting too. A number of

these Shihans have been guests of Aiki Kai Australia for our summer schools. I have had a chance to see them before and now another chance beckoned. One sensei of particular interest was Ryuji Shirakawa Shihan, I mentioned this to Tony when we met up at the Mandarin Orchard Hotel when we registered. Shirakawa Sensei was there, so Tony introduced me to him and mentioned that I was travelling to Japan after Singapore. After introductions, I asked if I could come to one of his dojos in Sendai to practice. He graciously said yes. This will be the subject for another article later.

Before I get to the actual training, the venue at Tampines Hub, was huge. The tatami was easily the size of 5 basketball courts and all indoors. For those of us who have not trained in South East Asia, many of the dojos are not air-conditioned. If you are planning to train in any of these countries be prepared for a very hot and humid session. However Tampines hub WAS air-conditioned! Phew! That was a very pleasant surprise. Tampines Hub is called a hub for a reason. It is a planned Singaporean hub city and contains a huge sports centre, with squash courts, tennis and basketball courts as well as a community stage and a full hawker style food court. The tatami in the dojo were jigsaw mats. These were the thicker type and allowed some serious ukemi. And laid the correct side up, to allow for smooth suwari waza.

Now a few month's on writing this article, much of it is a blur as it was the beginning of our trip. The training over the 3 days was very intense. As I said earlier there were many, many hours of training crammed into roughly 2.5 days. Our mornings started at 6:15 so we could get the dojo at 8 for a 9 am start. We didn't finish till 6pm for the bus ride back to our hotels. This made for very long days, and for long nights for some.

In each of the Shihans' classes, they demonstrated particular nuances to their technique from their experience. As Tony Smibert has said we practice Aikido to study it. As each Shihan demonstrated it is really up to us to take away what



Instructors who took part in Aikido Shinju Kai 30th anniversary seminars, among them our own Smibert Shihan, Rockstrom Sensei, Jack Sato Sensei, Lo Sensei and Wyman Young Sensei.

we can. We can only do that from the background of our experience. What a kyu grade would take away from such training is probably very different to what I experienced.

Standouts for me were; Waka Sensei. Many of us have trained with Waka Sensei when he came to Australia for our 50th Anniversary. He always displays strong and technically correct technique. He was no different here. His technique is very clean.

From the other Shihans: Correct posture, correct form, concentrating on the deepness of entry on when executing irimi nage, correct hand positions, conversions from one technique to another. Each of them showed a different aspect to our art.

A little surprise for me was that the Embu involved not just Tony Smibert Shihan, but John Rockstrom Sensei. John of course needed some willing Australian Uke to demonstrate. Of course, the Australian team had the tatami right in front of Waka Sensei and the Shihan panel. No pressure! A number of people from Australia were in attendance. Other than Tony Smibert Shihan and John Rockstrom Sensei others from Australia were Jack Sato Sensei (WA), George Lo Sensei

(NSW), and yudansha from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Newcastle.

There were several welcome events. I only made it to one of these – the ASK 30th Anniversary Dinner. It was a lavish black tie event organized by Aikido Shinju Kai. As you would expect this was a fantastic evening with Lion Dancing and Taiko as well as the presentations to Waka Sensei, the international Sensei and the organizing ASK team. Many of us would appreciate the amount of effort and pre-planning that goes into events such as this.

Many thanks and congratulations to Aikido Shinju Kai for achieving their 30th Anniversary. It is a significant milestone. The hard work was evident and it came off beautifully.

At this event I spoke with a few of the ASK Yudansha that I had trained with. They are a great bunch and I recommend that if anyone is travelling through Singapore to train with them. If there is any tip that I can give you – is make sure you have a lightweight gi(s) and, if staying for a while, access to a washing machine!

Report from Wyman Young
- Yondan, Shidoin.



At the 56th All Japan Aikido Demonstration at the Budokan.



*Meeting old friends at Hombu :
with Sensei Jerry Lim.*

Motherhood, Madness and leaving the house at night by Julia Foenander



What better time to be asked to write an article on the challenges of motherhood and Aikido than in Spring? I started training in Spring, stopped to have a baby in Spring, and didn't come back until Spring several years later. I remember the Spring I finally returned to training, I went to a party I didn't want to go to and met a strange man dressed as a pirate who suddenly started espousing the 'powers' of Aikido. At that moment I realised that overtime, I had gradually morphed into the damsel in distress, when what I really wanted to be was the pirate. My favorite Greek Myth tells the story of when Hades kidnapped Persephone and dragged her into the Underworld, her mother Demeter was so enraged she turned the whole world into an icy Winter. Eventually Hades released her daughter and the icy world melted and the flowers bloomed into a glorious Spring.

Years ago, when my best friend was in labour with her first (and only) child she suddenly after a mere 30 hours ran out of the hospital room, grabbed a cigarette from a random stranger (she was a reformed smoker), jumped into the lift and ran away. Next to the bed lay the essential oils, the meditation music and a notebook so she could "draw" what she was feeling ... How did it all go so wrong? One of the nurses smiled and simply said, "Whatever it takes..."

One of the fundamental challenges facing mothers of young children who wish to train is that there are no childcare facilities attached to any Dojo, and rarely are there classes during the day.

It's no mystery, it really is as simple as that. Some time ago in the 1990's a genius discovered that if you put a daycare at the gym then the women would come in droves and spend lots of money. They were right and this is the reason the gyms are full of women and many Dojos of various forms of martial arts aren't.

Of course, Aikido is not run as a commercial venture and therefore lacks the basic popularity, infrastructure and support your local gym has so it is reductive to make such comparisons. Imagine though for a moment a future world with an 'Aikido facility' with a Dojo, a whole food cafe, a communal kitchen, meeting rooms for development workshops, a library, accommodation rooms for interstate visitors, a childcare centre, family classes and so on. It may be very late in my lifetime but, as far-fetched as it sounds, that vision is a reality of our future; just think of the Vegan and the medical marijuana movements that have crept into our mainstream society, who would have ever thought?

Aside from all of that the real issue of motherhood is that you don't sleep, or eat, or do much at all when you have a preschooler, even with full support of your partner. I remember that first year sitting down at 1.00am every morning thinking, 'wow, I have a whole 3 hours of free time' and if I could go to Aikido this would be the time. Instead I fell asleep and dreamt of being pulled into dark water and never waking up.

Some women manage to train with babies and I truly take my hat off to them, I don't know how they manage. I remember before I was a mother one of my class mates had a baby and I didn't see her for nearly 2 years until I bumped into her in the street. Elated upon seeing her and her beautiful toddler I remarked 'You really should come back and train', she glared at me, said nothing and never spoke to me again. It was only years later that I realised what a ludicrous suggestion it was.

I know what I'm supposed to say; don't worry about arranging dinner, forget about that work assignment along with your unwashed hair and so on but the reality is, as the nurse looking after my friend in labour said, 'Whatever it takes...' If you need to cook dinner and freeze it four days before your class, write a list of what needs to be done on the day you train, stay back at work to finish that deadline the night before, or get up at the crack of dawn and bake muffins to assuage your guilt then do it! We all have our own way of living our lives and the best advice I can give mothers who are training Aikido or those wanting to train is to find what works for you. Of course the added strain and basic reality is that you have to have someone to look after your children and you have to be prepared to walk out the door - usually at night. Just like Persephone venturing into the Underworld we separate ourselves from motherhood and venture into elusive darkness and listen to our unconscious.

I remember very clearly the first time I was in a room where someone entered and around 80 people (mostly men but some women) fell silent and bowed their heads in silence. I was in Yokohama Japan over 20 years ago but this was not a Dojo. Shortly afterwards when the chatter and music in the room resumed a kind man grabbed my arm and whispered; "I can help you escape here if you are a prisoner". Shocked and bemused by this endearing thought I assured him that I was fine and that I actually was here, although unwittingly, of my own will. There's a code of ethics that echoes throughout many Japanese establishments; having only spent a few months living in Japan I am by no accounts an expert on the culture but I do have some insight. What I do know is that there is great honour, humbleness, commitment and a sense of doing something because that is the path you have chosen to walk.

Here in the West particularly we are constantly chasing pleasure, we are addicted to instant gratification on every level, we are part of a cog of a narcissistic and material system in which there is no end in sight. Therefore, it is important to recognize and honour some of the basic principles of Japanese culture when training in Aikido. Rarely do I want to come to

train, rarely do I 'enjoy' a class, so in lay terms we all (men included) need to re-wire our thinking to do something that (on the surface) we sometimes don't "feel like doing". When you commit to following the path you have chosen you may just find real spiritual joy and harmony. In short, practice saying yes when your instinct is to say no.

A few months ago the daughter of the now deceased Judo Sensei 'Mr. Michael Callaghan', my dear Uncle who was the oldest practising martial arts teacher in Australia, handed me his black belt saying "My father would have wanted you to have this". Mr. Callaghan died training on the mat in 2010, he was working with a young girl around 10 years old when he collapsed. Mr. Callaghan was instrumental in encouraging me to start training; his words were simple; "You won't like it at all, accept that fact and then train every week for 6 months, then make your decision as to whether you will stay."

Michael's funeral was delivered half in Japanese (even though almost no-one understood it) and included a heart-breaking passage from his daughter about what an honor it was to be his child. Half of the mourners stood and bowed towards his coffin as we saluted a great contributor to martial arts here in Australia; a wise and brave teacher, father and mentor.

So my message to all the women with children is please just make the decision to train and to keep on training. It can be brutal, exhausting, grueling, at times impossible and not a lot of 'fun' but in time you will learn to laugh at what once would make you cry.

Be fearless; unleash your anger, your madness, your compassion and any misery you harbor. And to quote a famous celebrity about training "Getting there is 90% - the rest is easy." How true this is.

Reflections of the journey to date of Aikido Women in Australia Linda Godfrey

Beginnings

It all began prior to the 50th Anniversary School in 2015. I was asked by Tony Smibert Shihan to host what was to be called a Gender Forum which included a number of senior women instructors from Australian and overseas. The forum provided the foundation for what has developed as an ongoing National program, which has developed into a permanent and ongoing opportunity for women's 'voices' to be heard as the organisation, evolves. The first forum provided the launch pad to many activities. These have included a regular feature of workshops and discussions at each Summer School, a book reflecting the contributions of all senior female trainees in Australia and a number of International instructors, called 'In Conversation with Aikido Women' (available both in print and on Amazon) and most significantly being invited to run a Gender Forum at the 2016 IAF in Japan. The net result of all of the above is that the journey shared by women is often very similar regardless of dojo, state or country.

This article seeks to explore from different lenses and roles what the past few years has meant to a number of women in Victoria personally. Each of the women instructs and is at a different stage of their journey in aikido ranging from senior to junior yudansha. Many of us have found that we have had to accept being role models even though most of us just see ourselves as students who want to train.

Linda Godfrey – Go dan – Area Representative Victoria and Glen Waverley Instructor

It has been an honour and a privilege to be assisting our organisation as it evolves in addressing this cultural change required for us to have an organisation that more closely mirrors the composition and values of our society where women make up 50% of the population.

For me personally, it has been very rewarding to watch how consistently the seniors not just 'talk the talk' but actually 'walk the walk' and see how they are striving to set the role models in their own personal teaching. It is clear to all they are using more female students to take ukemi and in general really trying to embrace the diversity of the community. They have told me that it is not natural yet for them that they are consciously doing it. It is has been very satisfying to see the ongoing commitment to addressing this issue at every level in the national organisation. I have also really enjoyed building and developing long term relationships with women trainees all across Australia and Internationally.

In terms of my own training, I had always made a point of training with as many female students as possible at National Schools and State Events. It is quite wonderful to hear again from many of my male seniors how they too are now doing this too and how much they are getting out of it.

The impact on my own teaching is that I am very conscious of using as many female students as possible to take ukemi. I have also spend much time teaching and supporting female students in developing their ukemi so that they can improve and have much more confidence in their ability to receive without fear of being 'bounced or thrown with force' by men who often underestimate the amount of strength they use to compensate for poor technique. I am also much more vocal about telling a training partner to 'back off' because it simply 'hurts' or is downright dangerous. In general, most men aren't even aware they are doing it and welcome the feedback.

Perhaps one of the most significant changes for me is that I have now reached the point that it is no longer possible for me to not take some sort of action if I see the types of issues we are trying to address in a class. Unfortunately, cultural change is hard, and it is slow. There will always be people amongst us who might never make the transition required.

Where this continues to occur, I will actively not train with those individuals. Previously, I might have just avoided them and said nothing. Now, like many other women in our organisation, when we all talk and share our experiences, I quite openly suggest to other women they might like to avoid these students too. What has been quite astonishing to me is how many men feel the same way about the same sorts of behaviours, and they too avoid training with these students. It is sad that this happens, but certain things are no longer acceptable, and people simply don't want to train with people who act in those ways anymore.



Joyfull moments as we train together...

Adrienne Cleaver Long – San dan and Heidelberg Instructor and VIC MPO

When I first started training I was often the only female in class in my home dojo. I found this to be quite nerve-wracking despite the fact my fellow training partners were (and are) highly supportive and awesome in general. I remember thinking it would be easier if another female was training so we could share tips and stories about techniques. Often I found it hard for a male to understand what I'm trying to say about a technique because they find it easy to do while I 'run' into their strength and cannot move at all! Or their hands are easily able to grip mine while I struggle to maintain a good grip during the technique (case in point is shiho nage). But I wouldn't have continued training if it wasn't for their support and guidance over these early years.

Female trainees understand when a technique 'fails' because we feel it immediately. This is why Special Days of Training and National Schools are so important because of the opportunity to meet and train with other women. Felicia Sensei, Linda Sensei, Beverly Webster and Jacquie Guilbis (her ukemi was so inspiring) were early role models because they were so helpful and confident on the mat. In recent years, Ruth Treyde sensei, Ruth Peyser sensei and Machiko

Hirata sensei have been very inspiring and influential in my training.

One of the negatives in my early days of training at Clifton Hill Dojo at special days of training was a tendency for (predominantly) male trainees to 'instruct' their juniors. I can only talk about my own experiences and the telling of stories in the female change room after class, but collectively we found this to be both frustrating and disheartening. What we would often find in these situations is the senior receiving the technique using so much strength that would make it extremely difficult for us to start moving, let alone finish the technique. Then they would happily spend the next few minutes instructing us how to do the technique, and when it was their turn to receive again, the strength would have suddenly disappeared.

These interactions have become less prevalent in my experience. I have also noticed there is less teaching on the mat on Special Days of Training, allowing trainees to (safely) work things out on their own. If there is talking, it is much briefer than it was before.

Recently, I have also noticed people speak up more on the

mat when something is uncomfortable. When I first started training I was taught we could excuse ourselves from training if we felt uncomfortable in any way, however I found this very hard to practice. It would bring up awkward conversations and feelings of shame and embarrassment which often lead to a conflict of personalities or opinions. It was much easier to go with the flow and hope the next technique came as soon as possible. These days I am more proactive and assertive in my training by seeking guidance from the instructor or speaking to my partner directly. I appreciate how difficult this can be for people to initiate, and only hope the current and ongoing conversation on gender diversity, on MPO's and what this means will enable people to feel confident in speaking up.

On being an MPO

I've been an MPO for Victoria for a number of years now and I'm only starting to appreciate what a big topic it is and just how little I feel I actually know about the subject. I am very thankful for Linda and Bill's senseis help, advice and guidance during this time.

Being an MPO is not easy and it is extremely important to remain neutral in one's opinions and feelings. A couple of times I have been shocked over what I have heard. It can also be overwhelming but I have come to realise these issues do not have to be solved in one sitting. It is also very important for the affected party/ies to be able to talk about what is troubling them.

This is of course a starting point in addressing the issues and what happens next depends upon the circumstances. I have referred matters to the Area Representative, attended training in other dojos and followed up on conversations with the affected parties. One of the weirdest examples was travelling to an isolated dojo to provide support for some

students only to find many trainees from inner Melbourne dojos had also travelled to the dojo! What started as a support session ended up as an impromptu discussion for all trainees on what is acceptable behaviour on the mat, what support measures are available and who students can refer to for help. It has since generated a follow up session with the Area Representative in Melbourne with the dojo as well as a discussion on bystander training for Victorian instructors as well as at Summer School.

These experiences have changed my training in letting go of assumptions of what is happening in the interaction with my partner. It is rare anyone comes onto the training mat as a clean state – we all bring our baggage with us, and though we may try to leave this off the mat, there are times when it affects our training and our exchanges with people. In light of this I try to be more understanding and open to what is happening in the present moment. I try to stay open to the fact that everybody's journey in aikido is different.

Lately I am less inclined to instruct my partners and instead try to set a good example as uke and / or nage. I often find I am learning a lot from my partners by feeling what is happening during the technique.

Over the years, I have noticed from the Victorian community an interest in and acceptance for the MPO role. What this means is students and instructors feel confident in being able to approach one of the MPO officers or the Area Representative for help about an issue. If they speak up, they will be heard. They are able to share their experiences in a safe and respectful environment

Students are more confident in speaking up when something is amiss. Male or female, it is okay not to train with someone with whom you do not entirely trust, or are comfortable with.

Diana Hope – Ni dan and Monash University Instructor and VIC Secretary
Aikido Australia – Gender Diversity Impact

"You want me to do this? But I'm not special!"

I apparently have this thought quite often, since that's how my last article for the Aikido Australia newsletter started.

Since then, I've been asked to photograph women at National Schools (*"I'm not a photographer, I just have a fancy camera!"*), including a special photoshoot for our book (*"My stuff was published?"*), to assist with running gender workshops nationally and internationally (*"I guess I do this sort of thing at work, but..."*) and then to start instructing regularly at the very dojo where I began my aikido journey (*"What?"*). I'm honoured to have had all these experiences, and yet, my first thought is still that I'm no one special to be singled out in this way.

And yet, I've kind of had to be.

At every workshop and forum that we've run, someone has usually said that the best way to attract and retain female aikidoka is to just have more women teach. More women to take ukemi. Women to be present at events and be seen by

others – female or otherwise. But where do we even get all these women instructors from in the first place?

Before writing this article, if you asked me if the presence of other women affected whether I trained or not, I probably would have said no. I started aikido to impress a boy (haha), so the first night I turned up to training on my own, I felt like I had proven to myself that this was for me. No one else had anything to do with that. But if you ask me who I remember seeing I first started, it's pretty much all women (Felicia sensei, Linda sensei, Beverley Webster...).

At that time, seeing other women on the mat was rare, so of course I still remembered them after I'd stopped training for a few years. Nowadays, I can still count my female peers on one hand, but most of the classes I attend usually have at least 50% female attendees... particularly when there's a female instructor. So maybe there's some truth to that suggestion after all?

I'm in the generation that's lucky enough to have a wide

—Aikido in Australia —

choice of female role models. Linda sensei of course, being my primary instructor and more than a match in height. Ruth Peyser sensei (New York Aikikai) is absolute grace in motion. Yoko Okamoto sensei's (Aikido Kyoto) hospitality, when she invited us to come to her beautiful, light-filled dojo after the 2016 IAF, and then made sure she trained with every single one of us during her class. The sheer terror of taking ukemi for Mutsuko Minegishi sensei (Guam Aikikai), and then taking her out sightseeing left an impression that will never fade. So many amazing women to look up to!

When I hear people from other dojos say things like “I wish our female beginners could see other girls on the mat...” or “I’m so used to having the change room to myself...”, I realise that seeing a literal 50-50 gender balance IS still rare. I wonder what it will be like for the women who are starting

their aikido journeys now, how long will it be before all of us take a true gender balance for granted?

As a relatively new instructor, I hope I don't do anything special or different because of the students' genders! I just try to emulate the teachers I admire, female or otherwise. Some of the times I've had to think the hardest about aikido were in the womens' changing room, when someone asked a question about something that happened in the class. Instructing at a university-based dojo with mostly beginners, I try my best to make it a positive and welcoming environment so that the students stay long enough to see where aikido can take them. Wait, does that make... me... a role model?

I'll never know what impact I may have made on someone else's aikido journey. I'm just one person, and no one special. But I, and all these other women are here, and just seeing that might be what someone else needs to start or stay.



A Kilo of Aikido — Please

A little while ago I was asked by a prospective new student about why there was a mat fee, what did he get for the mat fee, and if he paid a higher mat fee would he get more personalised attention? In other words, he thought he was buying a commodity and it stood to reason the more you paid, obviously, the more you got. Because that's how retail works, right?

This raises a very interesting question, what are mat fees for, what do they cover, what do they imply? This is either a similar situation Sugano Sensei must have faced early on in his teaching in Australia, or, he clearly wanted to address this specific point to us as we embarked on our Aikido journey. During a class in the early seventies he stopped to remark, to make a specific point about what mat fees were for. He said it was not like going to a green-grocer and buying a kilo of apples and a kilo of Aikido, where you received something very specific for the amount you paid, mat fees simply allow you the privilege to step on the mat. That's it, that's all it is, the right to step on the mat and participate in the training.

Sensei went on to explain to us that it was not his (the instructor's) job to teach Aikido but it is the student's role to learn Aikido. It's worth noting that down on your keikogi sleeve, so you can remember each time you train. It's not the instructor's job to teach Aikido but the student's role to learn Aikido. This puts the shoe completely on the other foot to what the new student above had in mind. An instructor is merely demonstrating what he or she knows, to the best of that person's ability, sometimes with added verbal support of the demonstrated actions, but not always. It is entirely up to the student to copy what was demonstrated and to study hard and learn from that demonstration and develop themselves. He made it quite clear that Aikido was a learning experience and the onus rested entirely with the student.

To be honest, until that moment, I probably hadn't really thought a lot about what mat fees were for, I paid my mat fee and got to train Aikido, case closed. But when he pointed out that the mat fee simply allowed me to be on the mat, and nothing more, the weight of learning fell on my shoulders with a thud. My responsibility as a student was clearly defined and this understanding of the 'teaching' process completely changed my passive approach to learning. It was my job to take in all I'd seen and heard, process it and repeat that specific, observed movement as best I could. The apple is on the tree, it's my job to reach out and pick it, not the trees job to bring the apple over and drop it in my lap. And certainly not a kilo of them.

PS: for new students not familiar with our fee system, membership goes to the national body and is used to assist with the growth of Aikido across the entire country. Mat fees assist your dojo with meeting their local expenses to operate at that location and any spare money goes to the state organisation. In neither case could you say the person paying the fee receives direct personal benefit. But on all occasions, we all directly benefit from whatever anyone pays in having quality, local Aikido instruction and also the highest level of instruction in the country, made available to all of us.



Article by John Rockstrom, seen here demonstrating during an embu at the Aikido Shinjuku Kai 30th Anniversary.

Editor's note: *I first began editing this publication at the end of 1999 and have been editing it ever since then— just on 20 years. In that time many fascinating articles have been published, some of which are now dated, but there are others that remain relevant regardless of when they were first published. One such article, published in the second issue I edited, I think deserves to be reprinted because what it expresses is as important today (perhaps even more so) as it was when it was written twenty years ago.*

A leap of faith

by Angus Thompson

In requiring the resolution of conflict by harmony and love, Aikido practice demands a paradigm shift in the way one perceives the world.

In the West, our professionalism, sporting and even personal lives are largely dictated by a win/lose mindset, which demands that for us to win, another must lose.

The cooperative interaction in Aikido, in which the giving and receiving of ukemi is as important as the execution of techniques contradicts this win/lose mindset. It requires the Aikidoka to discard all previous perceptions of physical, and in turn social interactions. Herein lies the first leap of faith that I believe one must make in order to follow the true path of Aikido; to trust that conflict can be resolved by harmony rather than confrontation.

In practical terms, this means that one must be sensitive to each uke, be they bigger or smaller, tired or energetic, young or old, a beginner or very advanced, and adjust one's movements accordingly. This constant awareness of your partner requires one to retain a mental focus throughout practice that is directed outward as well as inward. The giving/receiving of ukemi in turn requires great trust in one's partner's intentions and ability that they will not injure you. In a world in which people are increasingly self-centred, and for whatever reasons less trusting of those around them, this offers a great challenge to every aikidoka.

The second leap of faith comes from the principle that physical strength is not required for Aikido. The sports that I played for so many years in Australia constantly reinforced the notion that ability and success comes from great physical strength. Equal development of technique and strength are considered to lead to success in most sports. Slightly different to this, some Budo emphasise the development and refinement of technique to a point where strength becomes less necessary. However, Aikido is different again in that strength appears to actually prevent the execution of true waza.

While most aikidoka and almost all teachers are men, I believe that women may often realise some of these leaps of faith sooner than men. Since many women cannot apply strength to their techniques from the outset, they are forced from the beginning to find the way of no strength in their practice. In contrast, men may progress to a certain level with strength, but are eventually forced to relearn their techniques without physical strength, joining the path that many women have already been following. In addition, women are often more sensitive and intuitive making them better able to attune themselves to their partners. My own understanding of these fundamentals of Aikido has largely been furthered during practice with advanced female students, none of whom regrettably are teachers.

Therefore while I continue to try to improve my techniques and movements, the true challenge in Aikido remains discarding the mental and physical patterns that have been with me all my life: a daunting leap of faith.

Note: Angus, a former member of Aiki Kai Brisbane who moved to Japan to live and work, and to continue studying Aikido. This essay was published in Japanese in the newsletter of the Aiki Kai Hombu and was submitted by Angus as a requirement for his 2nd Dan grading in Japan. He kindly allowed us to publish an English translation in our newsletter for Spring/Summer 1999/2000.

T-shirts are not part of the dress code for males.

Recently the Teaching & Technical Committee (TTC) was asked to clarify whether T-shirts, singlets or other similar garments, could be worn underneath gi tops. For normal training in the dojo, the tradition is that men don't wear anything under the gi top and that women do wear a T-shirt.

However, for cultural, religious or medical reasons it is permissible for males to wear a T-shirt under their gi. Therefore, in those cases, it is polite for males who are required to wear a T-shirt to explain to their instructor the reason for doing so. This notification is particularly important when they visit another class or attend a special training with someone other than their usual instructor.

In that situation, a person should advise the new instructor before the class, that they are aware of the traditional dress code, and then give their reason for not being able to follow it. For both women and men, the T-shirt should ideally be white and plain, and not stand out underneath their gi.

John Watson, 6th Dan Shido-in

Editor: The article below by Smibert Shihan first appeared in volume 2 #2 Spring 2007. Many newer students would not have seen it so it seems timely to print it once again.

Equality and Training

by Tony Smibert AM, Shihan



Everyone has their own view of why equal opportunity is important, but we should all agree that equal opportunity is a fundamental principle. My own perspective was heightened a few years back by something I saw at a Summer school.

I was training within a group when it was the turn of one of our most senior trainees and instructors (who happens to be a woman) to be nage while the rest of the group went uke. She was sorting her thinking out around just what Sugano Shihan had demonstrated (a jo waza of a type we hadn't seen before) when a random male trainee in a white belt strode out from within the group and started to "instruct" her.

Being the type of person she is, the senior party smiled and frowned, then went on with her training and the junior person returned to the line of waiting ukes. I was more than surprised and said to him, "You shouldn't do that. We don't instruct our seniors!" His response was immediate: "But she was doing it wrong!" I then said, "It wouldn't matter if she was – you don't instruct your seniors." His response was: "Well, I like to help!"

Sensing a debate about to start and not knowing quite what to say, I probably said, "DON'T!" and hoped he got the picture. It wasn't a great exchange and may have left him no wiser – plus bemused by criticism of what may have seemed fine to him.

There are two issues at work here: a misunderstanding about how Aikido is studied and taught, alongside a phenomenon that female trainees often refer to: males automatically assuming a position of superiority at training even though their female training partner may be their equal or senior in Aikido terms (and, in the case above, her probable 35 years of prior aikido experience).

This takes place in many subtle ways. It may occur in a patronising lack of grip when training in katate-tori, or by the male smiling condescendingly when being thrown by a female – or it may occur in little directions given during regular keiko, or a hint of dominance when the male indicates that this hand or that hand is 'the one we're going to start with' and so on. In many cases it is a process that occurs without conscious thought. It is utterly out of accord with aikido thinking and may come from other areas in life.. It shouldn't be up to the women in our organisation to remind us that aikido training is for both sexes – with equality.

Started by a man and mainly propagated by men at first, aikido is enjoying wide popularity among women now – and especially outside Japan. It is not in itself a sexist activity and so types of inequality that may once have been traditional are totally unacceptable in the modern aikido world. We have to ensure that it is not allowed to go unchecked.

One of my best friends outside Aikido is also a female yudansha and she suggests that we haven't yet seen

quite where the evolution of aikido might go in terms of women, and won't until we see the women now in aikido evolve over a lifetime of training.

“The genuine seniors are now men, but that won't always be the case! Wait until today's women have spent a lifetime in aikido and are as senior as the men from their own generation.”

Her point is that we can look forward to seeing a broader perspective in the thinking and physical form of aikido when these people have evolved over their own 50 -60 years of training.

It's a wonderful thought: Sugano Sensei has often talked about aikido as a way to cultivate human beings and so we are certainly part of the first generation to broadly witness the cultivation of both sexes on equal terms in aikido.

This concept takes us beyond any 'equal opportunity policy' (and we need and now have that as well). It hints at a much bigger possibility of equality wherein Aikido becomes a little bit closer aligned with O-Sensei's vision of a human family united in aikido.

So, back to that little incident of earlier: removing the gender issue, what it also exposed was confusion over the distinction between 'teaching' and 'learning' as we see it in Aikido. Sugano Sensei's classes at Summer School are under his direct instruction and this means that each person in attendance can study 'direct'. Everyone is trying to make their own best observation of Sugano Sensei's teaching and then apply this to their own progress. Even very senior teachers who may also be teaching at Sugano Sensei's seminar will seldom offer instruction in Sensei's own class. The reason is, that aikido is 'learned' rather than 'taught'.

Sugano Shihan never refers to us as 'his' students. We refer to him as 'our' teacher but not the other way around. The master pupil relationship comes from the student. Teachers don't go around asking people to become their students. The role of an Aikido teacher is to lead by example, to study hard and to strive to become a better person in their own life. Then, as they progress, others will be attracted to follow. One leads naturally to the other, but the personal aim of a teacher should not be to progress in order to gain students. (Sensei often notes that when he was a young uchideshi aikido was 'a calling'. Now, he worries, many young professional instructors overseas merely see it as 'a career'.) It follows then, that giving instruction is not the biggest issue for a teacher – what really matters is to recognise that we're all trying to learn and that our whole system is structured to allow everyone access to the highest level of teacher while ensuring that all levels continue to study as students.

It's not about technique. The very word is probably a misnomer because it implies a degree of mechanical process that is not fundamental to our practice. Aikido understanding comes from the evolution of new pathways of thinking that evolve naturally in the brain as a result of a training system based on learning through bodily experience. If you learn logically (literally in the head) then you won't be able to respond unless your brain can think its way through what is required. And it can't do that quickly enough when action is called for. So progress comes from lengthy periods of training wherein technical knowledge is engendered by a cycle of demonstration, observation, imitation and repetition. Instruction remains important but nothing is more important than that 'student-mind' and regular training.

Where does this leave the sort of incident I mentioned earlier?

The less a person knows, the easier it may sometimes be to assume that you know enough; and so it's much easier for a relative beginner to jump to the conclusion that they know what's going on than it may be for a more experienced trainee.

A very experienced trainee will certainly be processing their teacher's demonstration differently than a relative beginner. To the 'beginner' a demonstration of irimi nage might seem a technical display of something specific and defined. But the more experienced will pick up much more. Take for example Sensei demonstrating tsuki iriminage. Whatever you see as you watch Sensei, remember everyone is sitting in a different position, and will see the demonstration from a different perspective, a different angle, and will see different things relative to their own experience.

How can one instruct the other in that situation? Unless one of them is formally responsible for teaching the other, both simply make the best use they can of their observations and try to put these into effect so that partner training will start to impact on their bodily learning. Obviously a senior training partner may occasionally have to assist a junior with instruction – but this is only to get them going. There would be little point in the junior instructing or advising the senior: both parties should have their attention focussed on the person teaching – especially if this person is a shihan or senior shihan.

We have to put our faith in someone and so it all starts when you first enter a dojo and your local teacher accepts you on behalf of the Sugano Shihan and the Aiki Kai. They then start to teach you in the best way they can. They give you the benefit of their best efforts and you give them yours in return. This simple model is expressed in our code of training: 'look after your juniors and respect your seniors'. It's really all anyone can do regardless of rank or experience.



*Summer School 2018 Special Guest Instructor,
one of the most senior female Aikidoka in the world,*

Shiban Minegishi Mutsuko 7th Dan.



2018 Winter school report

We had a record attendance of over 100 trainees, plus visitors from other Aiki Kai related associations. To continue our connection to Hombu Dojo and the next generations coming through Suzuki Sensei, who was uke for Doshu on his last visit here, was invited to attend and what a powerhouse he was! At only 36 and 6th Dan, he showed great technique, huge flexibility and an encouraging on-mat personality. Everyone was enthused with his style of training and his infectious energy. We have invited him back for next Winter School.

Our senior dans continued to demonstrate basic waza so that we could study them closely and make them the bedrock of our technique.

The new venue at St. Ignatius, Riverview, in Lane Cove provided a more central location but, more importantly, the accommodation was much improved over the old venue and the Common Room was a hub of social activity every evening. The full-size snooker table and the table tennis table were very popular. This really fulfilled Sensei's view for this type of event, training hard together and establishing a close camaraderie.

The mat area was jam packed but the NSW organisers say they will add more mats for next year's event. On a more prosaic note, there was plenty of space to store items in the upstairs balcony and shower and toilet facilities are right beside the dojo. And it has to be said, the catering was excellent, just what you need after a long day of training!

We must thank all the NSW team for their effort in putting the school together, but in particular Jikou Sugano and Felicity Peters Senseis for their outstanding work



Many thanks to all who helped with the preparations for winter school.





SUGANO SHIHAN'S WINTER SCHOOL
1~6 July 2018
SYDNEY



With Tony Smibert Shihan, Hanan Janiv Shihan, Roger Savage Shihan
and special guest Toshio Suzuki Shihan from hombu dojo

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