

合気道

Aikido



オーストラリア

Australia

President & Technical Director
S. Sugano 8th Dan Shihan

Vice President and National Area Representative

Tony Smibert Sensei, 6th Dan 179 Mole Creek Rd., Deloraine, TAS,
7304
Tel: (W) 03 6362 3326 (H) 03 6362 2474

Technical Teaching Committee

Tony Smibert Sensei, 6th Dan, Hanan Janiv Sensei, 6th Dan
Robert Botterill Sensei, 6th Dan, John Watson Sensei, 5th Dan
TTC Contact address: c/o R. Botterill. 2/10 Dawe Rd. Mitcham, Vic.
3132. Tel. 03 9873 5164

Area Representatives:

ACT

Hanan Janiv, 6th Dan. 23 Crest Rd., Queenbeyan, ACT 2620. Tel/Fax:
02 6297 8258

NSW

Andrew Dziejic, 5th Dan 5 Bertram St. Eastwood, NSW, 2122. Tel: 02
9858 5241

NT

Richard Barnes, 6th Dan. PO Box 254. Darwin, NT, 0801 Tel: 089 816
964

QLD

Graham Morris 5th Dan. 1 Inala Ave. Tugun, QLD, 4224. Tel: 07 5559
5483

SA

David Scott 5th Dan. PO Box 81. Norton Summit, SA, 5136. Tel: 08
8390 3322

TAS

John Karas 5th Dan. 43 David St. East Launceston, TAS, 7250. Tel: 03
6334 6144 Mob: 0418 585 702

VIC

Geoff Savage 5th Dan. 72 Mansfield St. Thornbury, Vic. 3071. Tel: 03
9484 5483

WA

Hugh Derham 5th Dan. PO Box 1274. East Victoria Park, WA, 6981.
Tel: 08 9367 6407. Fax 08 9368 6408
Mobile. 0421 342 857

Chairman of Administration: Austin James. 75 Highgate St. Bexley,
NSW, 2207. Tel. 02 9502 1413.

General Editor and Publisher: John Litchen. PO Box 3503. Robina
Town Ctre, QLD, 4230. Tel: 07 5578 8748
E-mail: jlitchen@bigpond.net.au

Contributing Editor: Bodhi McSweeney c/o PO Box 69, Meander,
7304. E-mail: bodhi@tassie.net.au

Registrar: Kathy McCarthy.

Registrations and information: PO Box 799 Warwick, Qld, 4370

Aikido Australia — official journal of Aiki-Kai Australia
Incorporated.

Website: <http://www.aikido.org.au/>

Print Post Publication number: PP424022/00903.

Address for official documents: GPO Box 2783EE. Melbourne, Victoria,
3001.

Copyright of material remains with each individual author. Opinions
expressed are those of the authors and not that of Aiki-Kai Australia
Incorporated.

Aiki-Kai Australia is the sole qualifying organisation for Aikido with the
Federal Government National Coaching Accreditation Scheme.

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 recently 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 should be confirmed for circulation soon, and will be posted on the website for all to see.

Editorial:

Everyone is no doubt aware that the next National summer school is going to be held in Launceston, Tasmania.

A national school is not often held in Tasmania so this will be looked forward to by many students around the country. On the other hand getting there is not going to be as easy as getting to Melbourne where summer schools are generally held, but every effort should be made to go as I'm sure no one who attends will regret having done so.

A lot has been written about National schools so it does not need reiteration once again, but a reminder that every student regardless of rank is expected to attend some national schools is appropriate. (Note: This is a requirement if you are hoping to be tested for a dan rank).

Because it has been a very long time since the last National school in Tasmania there is a feeling of something special about this next Summer school. It is going to be different, because Tasmania is different. There is a feeling of excitement down there, and freshness, and an enthusiasm that pervades all the dojos and the training, and this I believe will carry over into the summer school to be presented in Launceston.

We all know a lot of work goes into organising an event like this and it would be very disappointing to all those enthusiastic hard working people if fewer than expected people attend, so please, do make an effort to go to the National Summer school in Launceston.

The dates are 8th to the 13th January 2007 with an instructor's course on the 14th.

Location is the Launceston University, with training in the sport and recreation centre, only a short walk from the accommodation at Australian Maritime College, Newnham Drive, Newnham, Launceston.

Contact: Marion Davidson > scrawnsei@hotmail.com

Contact: Andrew Ross > asr1967@lotkey.net.au phone: 03
6326 5092

The focus for this issue of the newsletter is naturally on Tasmania and I would like to thank Bodhi McSweeney, our contributing editor, for the time spent, and the work involved in getting together the articles and photos presented in her column.

!!!! NEWS FLASH !!!!

**SUGANO SHIHAN'S SWORD SYSTEM 1
VIDEO IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR
PURCHASE (download) AT THE NEW
WEBSITE.**

www.shindokan-suganosvideo.com

Please have a look.
All funds raised are used to assist Sugano Sensei's
ongoing medical expenses.

Gentil Pennenaert Newport Beach Aikikai

On Learning to Receive by Simon Pearce

I was never taught ukemi directly by Sugano Shihan. It was from his senior students in Melbourne that I learned the mechanics of tucking the feet, turning the head and all the physical movements that protected my body from the powerful throws of Aikido practice.

After 16 years training, I can appreciate the art of ukemi in a deeper way; what we learn on the mat often informs our everyday lives. We all have disappointments and upsets in life and we can often be unbalanced or “thrown” by them. Good ukemi is found in accepting these challenges and keeping our spirit buoyant through them.

As Aikido students we've often been reminded that the term “sensei” literally means one who travels ahead and then shows us the way. A harsh fact of life is that sooner or later we all encounter tough physical challenges and being able to assimilate these is part of the ukemi practice that life gives us. The positive side of this is that as we adapt, our Ki, our essential spirit, has its best opportunity to shine through and carry us on.

Sugano Shihan is still well ahead of us and showing us the way. He is now teaching me to receive in a way more profound than I could have possibly imagined.

The Dragonfly Perches on the stick Raised to strike it *Kohyo*

This is a wonderful poem, full of both the simplicity and profundity of the classic haiku composers.

Great, but what has it got to do with Aikido? Absolutely nothing, and everything as far as I'm concerned.

Visualise a simple farmhouse in rural Japan; a farmer is being pestered by an errant dragonfly that has accidentally flown in and is trying to swat it with his stick. However, this is a very Aikido dragonfly that soon comes to the realisation that the safest place to be is actually on the hitting-stick itself; you can't hit something that is in contact with the weapon; as soon as the weapon moves, you move with it, there is no space to hit, there is no opening.

A basic Aikido technique such as gyaku hanmi katate tori koyuho (tenkan) illustrates the enlightened insect's understanding beautifully. As nage creates the classic tai-no-henka turning movement they should finish hip to hip with uke with no distance between them. This way if uke reacts by releasing their grip or even striking out with their free hand, nage can still extend their arm and complete the throw by virtue of their “connection” with uke. The closer you are, the safer you are. When there is literally no space to do anything else the Dragonfly's martial prowess is realised.

Flow by Wyman Young

Hey that's a cycling term. Flow. That's when you're cycling and you can feel and see the road in front. Your breathing is synchronised. Your muscles are working. Your legs are pumping. You can hear everything. Your heart is beating, the cranks turning, the rubber on your tires zipping on the bitumen and the air whistling past your ears. You are connected to the road in front of you.

Flow — The state of no-mind — Mu — Zen.

Do you feel it during Jiyu Waza? You are fit. You feel good. You have trained hard. Your body is warm and ready, your mind is open. You know the techniques. Shiho, Irimi, Kokyu, Tenkan, Combinations, Gaeshi. They roll out of your mind.

Your 5 opponents bow from zazen. You return their bow. You can hear a pin drop. You remember the lesson from Bruce Lee's Enter the Dragon – your eyes never leave them. One of them takes the initiative, stands and launches their attack. As one, they are upon you. Your first response – Irimi; and the deadly dance begins.

All the lessons on how to manage 5 attackers are in your soul. Line them up. Work through them. Throw one into the way of another. Break their rhythm. Take the initiative. Drive the cadence.

You watch to see that no one gets hurt. It's not enough to win; you care about each of the Uke attacking. They are giving their best for you. You must respect and honour each of them. Yokomen, Shomen, Tsuki. The attacks keep coming.

Ikkyo. No time for Nikyo or Kote-Gaeshi. Ah everybody's favourite — Irimi Nage — so simple, then perhaps the greatest of techniques — the endless Kokyu Nage.

You find the cadence of the Jiyu Waza. Uke and Nage are in harmony. You are the conductor, they are the orchestra.

Faster! Now you respond to their attacks faster! You pick up the pace. Attacker and defender merge. Who initiated that attack? Was it Uke? Or was it Nage? Your Uke respond to the increased speed. They are fit like you and there are 5 of them. Your mind laughs to itself. Who will slow down first? You or Uke?

Everything blurs. There is no one watching your grading. No dojo. No Yudansha grading panel. Even Sensei disappears. There is just you, and your Uke.

Flow. Mu.

Your mind is nothing. Your body is nothing. Your heart sings. You have merged with the energies on the tatami. How long have you been here? An instant? Forever? Who invented time? It doesn't matter...

Then suddenly; Sensei calls. It is over.

Your breathing is laboured. Your heart is pounding. You feel no pain. You look at your Uke. They are all breathing hard like you. A smile breaks over your face.

Again you have achieved Flow.

Uke and Nage return to their respective positions on the tatami. With respect, you bow to all your Uke. They all return your salute.

Your eyes watch them all.

The Bodhi McSweeney Column



In the last edition there was an interview with Mike Clarke. This article was to be part of this column. My intention was to introduce and hopefully inspire content and contribution that is interesting and relevant but not necessarily about pure Aikido.

As life in the publishing game isn't perfect it wasn't included in this column, thus my intention was lost. I loved hearing Mike's story about his colourful life and his art. Personally I would love to hear more of people's stories and experiences so please remember that all are welcome to contribute.

I am not a writer. I sit at my computer and say what ever comes.



Above: Bushwalking at Casey 2002. photo by Brian Murphy.

Below: Jiyu Waza at Mount Wellington, Hobart 2005. Photo Helen Richards

The Bodhi McSweeney Column

This column is an attempt to hear and voice impressions, issues and interests of both women and men in Aikido so please contribute your ideas.

This issue we have two articles from Tasmania to herald the upcoming Summer School. If you are interested in coming to Tasmania early or staying on for a visit and taking advantage of training around the state, training times and dojo addresses can be found on the Aikikai web site. All information is current.

If you have anything to say about your experience with Aikido please contact

Bodhi McSweeney PO Box 69 Meander 7304

tenchi_farm@bigpond.com.au

Aikido Destinations by Sarah Richards

I first came to Tasmania en route to Antarctica where I was going to study the marine invertebrate communities at Casey Station. Living in Antarctica teaches you skills rarely developed in our sunburnt country; such things as moving successfully on ice and snow and the value of boot chains, neck warmers and a good set of gloves. My Aikido training was valuable too, especially being able to land safely in a fall.

After returning from my final trip to Casey I made my way with much anticipation to the Hobart dojo at the PCYC in Liverpool Street. There I discovered that the Aikido I had so often thought about during the last four years was alive and well. Returning to training after such a long break was both difficult and rewarding. I found myself amongst a great group of people and within a strong network of the four dojos around the state. Hobart in the south and the three dojos in northern Tasmania: Deloraine, Launceston and Devonport.

In Tasmania we regularly have State Training weekends where the four dojos come together to train, for gradings and sometimes to train with visitors from interstate. Tasmania offers great opportunities for Aikido training, both inside and outside of the dojo. Tasmania's abundant and beautiful wild places give inspiration for training outside. This is especially true in summer when 40^o+ translates to long summer nights.

Last summer in preparation for my shodan grading I spent five weeks working at Tenchi Farm, which is Martin and Bodhi's place and the site of a planned new dojo. The farm lies at the edge of the Meander Valley. Working in the organic vegetable garden under the boundless Meander sky was a wonderful change to desk work. The old peaks that stand on her horizon make Tenchi Farm feel like the centre of the universe. While I was staying at Tenchi Farm I trained in the evenings at Deloraine and Launceston.

The Deloraine dojo is in an old church on the main street. The building has now been completely encased by the surrounding properties. All that can be seen from the street is a single white door with its blue sign and red letters reading 'AIKIDO'. Inside, the mat fills the whole floor space up to the dais except for a walkway up one side. The mat is relatively small and often you will hear the shout "Short!" as someone is instructed mid ukemi to shorten their roll to mind the suddenly close cedar paneled wall. There is a highly focused attitude and a generous acceptance of each individual on the mat.

Launceston and Devonport are both about a forty minute drive from Deloraine, east and west.

In Launceston the dojo is located on the University campus at Newnham and is also used by the local Judo group. This continues an association between Tasmania's judoka and aikidoka that began when Aikido was first becoming known to the world outside of Japan.

Devonport, on the banks of the Mersey River, is where the ferries crossing Bass Strait dock. The Devonport dojo is in the Devonport Recreation Centre on Forbes Street. Here, sharing the mat with their local Judo group has been a source new aikidoka and where the enthusiastic can practice both arts.

During my time practicing Aikido I have had the good fortune to train at many different dojos, in New South Wales and Tasmania and also briefly overseas. My experience of Aikido has been expanded by the great variety of people whom I have met and trained with. I have always felt welcomed as a visitor. And as for home, I feel very lucky to live in Tasmania and to be part of the Aikido community here.

Please come and visit!

Training Aikido in Different Places

by Martin Bratzel

The 40th Anniversary summer school in Melbourne reminded me of the different places and people I had trained with over the years before I ended up here in Tasmania practicing with Tony Smibert Sensei in Deloraine in what must be one of the coldest dojo in the nation. The heat is provided by the passion, attitude and intensity of the local crew. Whether through an Outdoor trainings in midwinter under a full moon at Tony sensei's backyard, a training in the snow up in the highlands of the central plateau or as we had it recently here on Ten-Chi farm a Kotodama training week end with area rep John Karas sensei the traditional Aikido training seamlessly connects with the unique beauty of nature in the Tasmanian landscape.

I started and trained in Germany for the first three years and regularly went with the people in our Dojo to the South of France for Aikido camps a few times a year. The next phase was in Japan where for 3 and a half years I trained in Aikikai's Hombu dojo in Tokyo where I got my grades to Nidan.

While travelling I also trained in Athens and Bangkok and enjoyed the opportunity meeting people of different nationality and background.

What stands out for me is the overall openness and ease in interacting with Aikido people, the trust and common spirit that glues us all together. Even if we do not understand each other's language everyone understands shomen uchi and iriminage.

In Germany in the beautiful and friendly dojo I started with a beginner's course Aikido was very young. The instructor of the beginner's course was a 4th kyu while the main teacher was a 1st kyu. And yet the spirit of aikido was clearly present and its impact on me profound. I knew I had found something that echoed a powerful Yes on different layers of my being filling in an empty part of my life that I did not even know was there. The friendship, warmth, acceptance, respect and welcoming of everyone there has been the standard experience in all dojos I knocked on the door of. A funny exception was at Saito sensei's dojo at the Aikido shrine in Iwama. I did not have the written recommendation required and Saito Sensei just growled at me and a couple of big uchi-dechi came towards me with serious faces and said "you betta go" even though I had already been there for half a day and had helped shifting crates of sake for the next party. A hangover could have explained the sour face Saito Sensei was making.

The hospitality in the Aikido camps in the beginning of my Aikido career in the south of France was at the other end of the spectrum. Jean-Luc the teacher a 5th dan studied Yamaguchi sensei's Aikido while his wife did the catering. What an experience! The two mornings and one evening session allowed a long siesta break from lunch time till 5 pm which together with the French cuisine, the company and atmosphere made everyone's heart sing. I would love for that to happen right here on Ten-Chi farm. And

who knows it might happen still for as the old Japanese saying goes, it ain't over till the fat Buddha smiles. He certainly did smile at me when I arrived in Japan as a young 4th kyu with no money and no connections. I soon found a job as a movie extra in Japanese war movies and later as an English teacher which was probably better for me than for my students who I hope since then have managed to smooth out their German accent. What an opportunity for a young man to train at the Hombu Dojo. A Japanese 5th dan took me under his wing and trained with me mostly for another half hour after the regular class on the 3 times per week that he attended the morning classes from 8 to 9. He had started Aikido with O-sensei and was a soft smiling and lovely man of medium build, a crew cut and big ears who enjoyed a good laugh. In the years of training he never once corrected a technique I did. The only two things I remember him doing a lot was breaking out in laughter when he felt I was too tense or he brought his hands up to his ears pulling and shaking them with a grin on his face as if to say lift your arms with that much effort only. That is what I thought he was saying, unless he just had ticklish ears.

I found the Hombu teachers very open to foreigners and never experienced any discrimination towards me what so ever. With the many different teachers and classes the student teacher relationship had its own quality and I do not think any teacher ever knew me by name. And yet when I met Osawa senior sensei, Watanabe sensei or other teachers by chance on the street there was a great sense of warmth and connectedness, an intuitive knowing of being on a path together regardless of grade or background. A path containing more mystery than understanding, more possibilities than limitations in our endeavour, as Tony sensei relates of Osawa sensei saying "of becoming better people"



Martin Bratzel at Ten-Chi farm.



Even though the focus is intense, it is clear these people, like everyone else who attended, were enjoying every moment of the training at Sugano Shihan's 40th Anniversary National Summer School in Melbourne.

Although the next National Summer School is likely to be a somewhat smaller affair, it will be equally as intense and enthusiastic, and will give all attendees the opportunity to continue to refine and develop their Aikido under the personal direction of Sugano Shihan.

Three people you will certainly meet at the National Summer school in Launceston.

Above: John Karas Sensei seen here practicing with Ken Cottier Shihan.

Right: Andrew Ross (see contact Details on page 2).

Below: Tony Smibert Sensei, Vice President and National Area Representative for Aiki-Kai Australia.



First National School of our 42nd Year

by Tony Smibert Sensei



Winter School was a very different affair from the recent 40th Anniversary Summer School. Numbers were modest and there was the usual intimacy that is so often a characteristic of our winter schools. The upside of is that students always have greater personal access to Sensei, can sit around and chat with friends and, because we're not scattered around a university campus, there is a sense of communal living hard to achieve at Summer School.

Sugano Shihan was in fine form. From the moment he arrived he seemed buoyant, and was clearly no longer having problems with his latest artificial limb. His classes were inspiring but, from the beginning, he made it clear that he was concerned about the quality of ukemi. He observed that ukes were not responding in a way that reflected attentiveness, then went on to say that he felt this might indicate that local teachers are giving too much technical instruction. He explained that when a person learns with their head (and logic) they are not necessarily learning something that will result in their body understanding it. Aikido is learned through body movement in regular training and following the movements of your seniors as nearly as possible in your own movement. He said that knowing a thing with your head does NOT mean that your body can do it. He was obviously very concerned and found many ways to make this point to the

TTC. This gave us a very clear direction for our own classes at the School where we tried to pass on Sensei's Direction – and it is something which the TTC, Area Representatives and local instructors now have to reflect in local classes. It was a very clear direction. One of the more interesting analogies he used to illustrate the point was during a meal in a Chinese restaurant when he observed to the TTC that ukemi should not be soft and “jelly-like” but “crisp” or “crispy”...

He also made a clear distinction between “information” and “technical instruction” and explained to one group of yudansha during a meal that instructors should explain the principles and philosophy of Aikido as best they can so that, when the student has progressed through physical training, they will have a context for their own understanding. He used his personal studies with O-sensei as an illustration, explaining that O-sensei used to talk about standing between Heaven and Earth but none of the young uchideshi had understood him at the time. However, because they continued to evolve through training over the years that followed they could refer back to O-sensei's explanation and come to understand it long after his death. O-sensei didn't teach ‘technique’. He demonstrated his Aikido and students were simply expected to follow.

Given what Sensei was teaching and the enthusiastic



response of all students by the end of the week he was clearly much happier with the level of attentiveness.

After the dan tests Sensei explained that it was important for people to try to achieve the pre-requisite days of training between dan gradings in as few years as possible. Not because they should be in a hurry for grading but because this would ensure a more focussed level of attentiveness. Three, four or even five days of training per week before moving to the next dan in very few years is a better way to go than one day per week over many years. This doesn't mean that students should expect to be recommended just because they have attained the pre-requisite days of training but that, naturally, an applicant's readiness, fitness and understanding will reflect the focus and time they've committed. This leads to recommendation and an opportunity to take the test. Those of us from the early years in Australia will remember that 4 to 6 days a week was not uncommon for the leading students and I understand that in Sydney it was considered bad form if Sugano Sensei was in the dojo and his closest students were not there too. (You didn't take nights off.) This was part of the attentiveness and commitment that he expected but never spoke of back then.

Sensei also reminded the TTC to recognise that the vast majority of trainees world-wide only see Aikido as a hobby

and not necessarily a vital study. He emphasised that this was, of course, OK but that our Direction should be to build those who seriously "study". Training should reflect focus and teachers should assist students to find their own way through vigorous training that emphasises "learning-through-doing" rather than technical explanations. (This is a challenge for someone like me who is naturally wordy!) Interestingly, it occurred to me that when a teacher starts to teach technique with his or her head rather than through ongoing demonstration of the best they can do themselves there will be a subtle change in the class from the top down. Even the most focussed and attentive student will soon learn to emulate the approach and start responding with their head, rather than their body – an outcome we don't want.

Sensei also commented on the asking of questions: he said that if a student asks a question he answers – but it doesn't mean that they will understand. This was a reminder that he has previously made it clear that students should not ask questions in the dojo. Just imagine if everyone took the opportunity to come forward and ask whenever they wanted to...and would this lead to a better collective or personal understanding of Aikido?

These are big issues in teaching Aikido and lead to Osawa Sensei (Snr)'s often quoted comments years ago to Robert Botterill Sensei and I that we shouldn't worry about growing the Aiki-Kai but, rather, to concentrate our efforts on becoming better people ourselves. In other words the obligation is not to teach but to be worth following and this can only be achieved by working hard at Aikido yourself. The next thought that comes as I write is that I could always sense in the classes of people like Osawa Sensei, Sugano Sensei, Chiba Sensei, Arikawa Sensei, Tada Sensei and others that the training was going to be "real" so I had better be alert to the challenge. There was always electric quality there more palpable and impressive than the stylized fluidity I sometimes saw with lesser teachers who had not been direct followers of OSensei. We need to keep this alive in ourselves, because energy can die out within a generation – and has done in some Aikido schools around the world.

National Schools are an occasion when we get together in order to train communally, to share our enthusiasm, interest, energy and experience; but they are also an occasion when those who are unable to put as much time into Aikido at home as they might like can truly "study". This means that there should be a higher degree of awareness, attentiveness and focus at these events. It gives EVERYONE a chance to experience what the earliest students enjoyed and had access to back in the founding years of our national organisation.

It was a great week. The weather was kind (I returned to very cold and wet conditions at home in Tasmania), many people did a lot of work to make it a success and so it was very rewarding to be involved. We were treated to our first National School on the new mats and so I thank those who facilitated the purchase on behalf of us all. They were undoubtedly much more slippery than we thought they would be, making some elements of training an interesting experience. I'm sure everyone has their own memory, but mine is of forward rolling, then trying to rise immediately into facing and attacking nage only to find myself sliding backwards. The same thing occurred one or two times in bokken ukemi for Sensei so that I felt like a cartoon character running fast but going nowhere...or moonwalking... Anyway, the mats are a GREAT asset and thank you once again to those who organised them.

Thanks also to the organisers and workers for the School, to Sensei and to everyone there for an inspiring week!

Training, Responsibility, Commitment...



Shibonage with Doshu.

One of the great things about Aikido is that, once you've been training for a while, you can start to help others along the way. It's essential to Aikido that senior and junior trainees both respect and help each other.

At the heart of the system is what is often called the master-pupil relationship. It's quite different from the teaching structure you'll find in a school or university – and very different from the coaching system normally found in physical culture, especially competitive sports. Aikido is not, in any case, a sport in the most commonly held sense because it has nothing to do with competition. Its purpose is to cultivate mind and body. It's about creating a complete person through the efforts of that person. There's no defined outcome in terms of development, but you expect to see increasing finesse in their capacity to perform Aikido techniques. Our goal is not physical skill anyway – although we arrive at it through physical training. The real goal is to have each person find themselves within the training.

A religious person may, for example, also find that Aikido has enhanced their private religious experience. An artist might find an insight into art itself. It's not uncommon to find coaching manuals for tennis that refer to the inner-game principles that come from Aikido. Nothing is fixed and so the whole idea of 'teaching' Aikido is fraught with difficulties. Aikido is not something pre-defined in form or principle. It is always evolving. Ask Sugano Shihan what Aikido is and, if he answers you at all, it will most likely be to tell you that Aikido is a 'big question-mark!'

So how can you teach it?

There is no fixed way: just training, example, responsibility and commitment.

If you want to be a teacher and to be entrusted with the responsibility that this entails then you do have to understand the nature of the responsibility. You also have to make a commitment. Responsibility and commitment are absolutely fundamental to the Way of the Teacher in Aikido.

We all know that there are different teaching and leadership levels in Aikido. At the apex of this hierarchy are 'shihan' meaning 'teachers of teachers', masters, people with a profound understanding, people 'worth following' and 'worth committing to' (for the student). The receipt of Doshu's qualification to shihan level carries with it an enormous responsibility to maintain personal integrity and care for others and each shihan commits to this by acceptance of the qualification. Traditionally, shihan have a special relationship with Doshu and are authorised to examine dan gradings. The shihan is entrusted with the responsibility to do so on the basis of his/her personal assessment – the Doshu does not check-up on the standard or hold enquiries

Below a shihan come the 'shidojin' and 'fuku-shidojin' – literally 'instructor/s' and assistant-instructor/s. They have responsibility to pass on the teachings of their shihan. They are expected to understand the form and technique of Aikido and to strive hard to follow the shihan's direction in their own regular practise. They should be looking for insight and studying hard themselves. They're not coaches and should not be 'looking for personal students'; but rather, striving to become better aikidoka in themselves so that others will be moved to adopt and follow their example.

One way of looking at this is that they prepare local students to understand and access the teachings of the shihan – and in Australia this explains the importance of National Schools where everyone who attends has access to Sugano shihan's direct



A helping hand from Yamada Shihan.

teaching. On the mat at Summer School and Winter School there is no-one between you and the Shihan; your local instructor is probably in the class training and studying along side you.

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching in this system is that you are freed from having to impress anyone; you just do the best you can in your own study and teaching and demonstrate as best you can your understanding of what you have been taught. The grading syllabus provides a core structure to build your classes around and training within the national syllabus leads to progress for all involved. You don't have to be a font-of-all-knowledge and the system safeguards you from 'guru complex'. Most students respect their local teacher as someone of greater experience and enjoy that the teacher is also working sincerely towards a personal goal of their own. They also understand that their teacher is consequently sharing hard won personal experience - and are usually only too pleased to find that their teacher doesn't know all there is to know. Go to any Summer School and you will observe those in teaching positions committing to much the same training as everyone else. You may even notice some of them training as hard, if not harder, than others (given their personal health and physical condition).

Fundamental to all of this is that those in teaching positions need to understand the nature of commitment and responsibility. They have to make a deeper commitment to the shihan's Direction than the average student and have a responsibility to pass on what they can to those in their personal care - the local students. If a trainee can't make this sort of commitment or accept this type of inherent responsibility - a traditional 'loyalty' really - then they should not expect to receive shido-in or fuku-shido-in qualification from the shihan. Sensei's position on this is very clear. He made a commitment to O-Sensei in 1965 that he would teach and protect Aikido here on O-Sensei's behalf and has worked very hard to do that over many years. Then, in 1975 Aiki-Kai (Aust) was established to assist him to do this (see our Constitution).

Over the years he taught and gave authority to others to teach on his behalf within this aikikai and that continues today. He has committed to lead and to give his authority to all our activities. Consequently, so far as he's concerned, those teaching within Aiki-Kai (Australia) are doing so his behalf. He also gives his authority to Kyu gradings (that he doesn't conduct himself) and he personally assesses and recommends to Doshu all dan-gradings up to 6th dan.

From the Association's perspective, Sensei's authority

underwrites all our activities. It structures our gradings and the authority of Area Representatives, TTC and so on.

Neither he nor his organisation inspect our registered dojos or shido-in to make sure they are doing the right thing. Aikido is based on trust and loyalty. This is the way we have operated for 40 years - ever since Sugano Sensei made his own commitment to O-Sensei. What he has achieved is an example of the system. Looking around, you may see budo organisations that promote more or have a greater turnover of students; yet how many of their people have remained training together for decades? It's the key question because; where the traditional master pupil relationship goes the retention rate drops.

Our organisation does require certain behaviour of its teachers. And because of the current legal liability issues involved, the Aiki-Kai has to ensure that instructors and dojos are fully cognizant of all their responsibilities. For example, a registered instructor who participates as an Aikidoka in events not conducted by the Aiki-Kai or organises such an event almost certainly creates a legal liability for us and these would be examples of behaviour that would normally lead to Sugano Shihan removing their teaching authority.

In this organisation we might occasionally disagree with each other but our commitment is constant. We expect it from each other, and respect it in each other. No-one has ever said that Aikido attracts or makes perfect people. So it sometimes shakes the confidence of new students to find that we seniors are flawed as individuals. Sometimes, so much so, that the student leaves in disappointment. Those who leave for this reason may have had an unrealistic view of what it is to be an Aikido person. Aikido doesn't require perfection from anyone - only a sincere effort to improve. Our strength is that we have all committed to follow a path together and along the Way we hope to improve.

You may find yourself in a position of leadership or following, may find that you're asked to take responsibility for the management of a dojo or event, or to conduct grading examinations, or start a new class somewhere. So long as all parties remember that the Way involves both commitment and responsibility there's a pretty good chance that an understanding of Aikido will be nurtured in the teaching structure.

Training is the way we study and teach Aikido; and training leads to insight.

That's Aikido.



Kokyunage with Takase Shihan.



Kokyunage with Tony Smibert Sensei.

Preparing the body for training with Sugano Shihan



The shot below is the same finish as 5, but done from the left instead of the right side.



Sugano Shihan has always emphasised the importance of preparing the body before training. The above movement was one of a series he demonstrated in one of his classes at his 40th anniversary summer school. This particular movement is from Katatori Men uchi attack. Note that if Uke maintains the shoulder grab, as Sugano Shihan walks through uke will be twisted around and bent over backwards.



Another part of the same set of movements, involved Sugano Shihan trapping Uke's arm as he enters, which turns uke over completely so that his back is locked against Sensei's back and he is unable to move unless Sensei releases him. This is much more difficult to receive.

Time is the Essence by John Litchen



Do your expectations exceed your ability?

Often the expectations of new students far exceed their ability to perform which leads them into feelings of disappointment, and unless this disappointment can be overcome, they leave in search of something else that is perceived to be easier and which comes closer to fulfilling those expectations.

I believe this is a result of the consumerism that pervades 'Western' thinking and culture. If we pay for something, we want it immediately, not next week or next year, but right now.

We see in the window of a patisserie a beautiful chocolate cake. Since we love chocolate we can imagine exactly how that cake will taste, so we buy it. It is expensive but we know it will taste good. Often the taste exceeds what we expected and so we are satisfied that we really did get more than our money's worth.

When it comes to an Art such as Aikido, we see a master teacher, or a very senior teacher, demonstrating something that is elegant, with beautiful flowing movement that is absolutely dynamic and powerful, and that has astonishing results which happen without any apparent effort. We want to do this!

Because we pay for our tuition and training we expect to be able to do with some coaching what we saw the teacher do. Disappointment soon sets in when we find we can't replicate what we saw.

Perhaps we didn't see it properly. So we watch again, and we try it again, only to discover that we still can't do it. Feelings of frustration could then lead to disappointment and we start to think perhaps we are not getting our money's worth.

What newer students don't see is that the teacher's understanding of what is being done is far greater and definitely more subtle than what the student thinks the teacher is doing. The teacher has had many years, perhaps decades of intense training and study which leads to a different kind of understanding which is beyond the simply observable physical aspects of a technique.

The master teacher is operating on various levels beyond the outward physical movement which also is often not as obvious as it appears. He has a deep internal perception of what needs to be done to utilise Uke's energy and flow of movement to create a situation where Uke is compelled to take ukemi for protection. The more internal the understanding and perception, the more likely the physical appearance of the technique will diminish — sometimes to the point where an observer hardly sees anything other than Uke suddenly is flying through the air or crashing resoundingly to the mat.

For kyu grades and many yudansha this is not possible to replicate. There are decades of intense practice leading to the understanding and subtlety the master teacher is demonstrating. It can not be replicated through simple observation. Sure we pay our money to learn, but we can not learn that. There is no instant gratification. We are not buying a product.

But with time and dedication and desire to one day approach an understanding, we may achieve what we expected when we first entered the dojo to begin our studies.

Then again we may not.

Gratification lies in being content to practice and learn, by increments, with no expectations of getting more than we put in. If this is the basis with which we approach training there will be no disappointment and we may one day surprise ourselves with what we achieve.

This issue's contributors



Tony Smibert Sensei, 6th Dan, Vice President of Aiki-Kai Australia, Vice Chairman of the International Aikido Federation, National Area Representative for Australia, Senior member of the Technical Teaching Committee, Artist and writer. Smibert Sensei teaches at the Deloraine dojo near where he lives in Tasmania. This is a small dojo with a wonderful ambiance and a great group of students who are always ready to welcome visitors, so if you are thinking of travelling anywhere in Tasmania, make sure you call in to practice at Deloraine.

HELP NEEDED

As National Area Representative I have to contribute regular reports on behalf of Sensei, the TTC and the Organisation. But there are also MANY others among the senior trainees whose insights into training would be valued in this newsletter. So, please, if you have any ideas you would like to develop for the Newsletter, contact John Litchen. He's working hard to make the Newsletter a success – along with Bodhi McSweeney as a consulting editor. Both of them want to help if you have a contribution or report in mind.

Fortunately we already have many younger contributors who continue to make the magazine really worthwhile and what it was always intended to be — a publication of lasting value. Just look back over the last couple of years of issues and I hope you will see what I mean. And of course, credit and thanks overall must go to John (and, recently, Bodhi). Actually, this is a good opportunity to thank John for the amount of time he has put into writing, photography, layout, coordination and all the rest of it over many years now. I also want to thank Monica, John's wife, for her support of John in this. Like Bodhi and her partner, Martin Bratzel, they're typical of the many individuals and families hard at work behind the events and activities that make our aikikai function.

Simon Pearce is a 3rd dan from Melbourne.

He can be seen below sitting in the front row on the left of the picture carefully studying how Yamada Shihan's uke is going to take ukemi.



Acrophobia

Old definition: fear of heights

New definition: fear of koshi nage

Kindly contributed by David Dowe 4th kyu, who says he and koshi nage are not getting on at all well, so to overcome his fear he jokes about it. David trains at Monash University. Previously he trained in Spain as a 5th kyu at the Universidad Politecnica de Valencia.

**There are four dojos in Tasmania:
Deloraine, Devonport, Hobart, and Launceston.**

Deloraine has classes on Tuesday 6:30 to 8:00 pm, on Wednesday at 7:00 to 8:30 pm, a Thursday children's class at 4:00 to 5:00 pm, and there is also a class on Saturday morning 9:30 to 11:00 am.

Devonport has classes on Monday and Thursday 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

Hobart has classes on Monday and Thursday at 7:30 to 8:45 pm, and on Saturday morning at 10:30 to 12:00 noon.

Launceston has two classes per week, Monday and Thursday, both at 7:00 to 8:30 pm.



Wyman Young works at IBM Global Technology Services Asia Pacific as Sales Operation Executive. He holds a 3rd Dan certificate. Flow is his first contribution to this newsletter.

Bodhi McSweeney and Martin Bratzel both live and practice at Deloraine. Their photos appear on their respective pages so they are not repeated here. They are in the process of building a dojo on their farm (Tenchi-farm) near Deloraine.

John Litchen is the Editor of this publication. He is a writer and photographer who has published two books: Convergence - Aspects of the Change (fiction) and Aikido - Basic and Intermediate Studies (non-fiction). In this issue his photos appear on the front and back covers and on pages 7,8,9,10,11,12, 13, and 15. He is 3rd Dan and trains at the West Burleigh Dojo, Gold Coast Queensland, and teaches a beginners class on Wednesday evening.



