

# *Aikido in Australia*

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 1



**Aiki Kai Australia Founder**  
**Seiichi Sugano Shihan 8th Dan**  
**Honorary Patron**  
**Yoshimitsu Yamada Shihan 8th Dan**

**President: Tony Smibert 7th Dan Shihan**  
179 Mole Creek Rd., Deloraine, TAS, 7304  
Tel: (W) 03 6362 3326 (H) 03 6362 2474  
**Vice President: Tristan Derham**  
tderham@gmail.com M: 0420 336 134

**Technical Teaching Committee**

**Tony Smibert, 7th Dan Shihan, Robert Botterill, 7th Dan Shihan,**  
**Hanan Janiv, 7th Dan Shihan, John Watson, 6th Dan,**  
**Andrew Dziedzic, 6th Dan.**

**TTC Contact address:** c/o National Coordinator for the TTC, National Area  
Representative, Andrew Dziedzic, 5 Bertram St. Eastwood, NSW, 2122.  
Tel: 02 9858 5241 e-mail: dziedzic@bigpond.net.au

**Area Representatives**

**ACT: Hanan Janiv, 7th Dan** 23 Crest Rd., Queenbeyan, ACT 2620.  
Tel/Fax: 02 6297 8258

**NSW: Austin James, 5th Dan,** 29A Yarran Road, Oatley, NSW 2223.  
Tel: 02 9580 2627. M: 0417 435 949 email: ausjam1@gmail.com

**NT: Marie Petery, 6th Dan,** PO Box 131 Alice Springs, NT 0871.  
Tel: 0413 376 299 email: marie.petery@gmail.com

**QLD: Graham Morris 6th Dan.** 1 Inala Avenue, Tugun, Qld 4224.  
Tel: H. 07 5559 5483 Mobile: 0412 602 873.

**SA: David Scott 6th Dan..** PO Box 81. Norton Summit, SA, 5136  
Tel: 08 8390 3322

**TAS: Martin Bratzel, 5th Dan.** PO box 69 Meander Tas, 7304.  
Ph: 03 6369 5321 email: tenchi.farm@bigpond.com

**VIC: Linda Godfrey, 4th Dan..**  
Tel: 03 9802 7211 M: 0418 381 674 email: linda.godfrey@iinet.net.au

**WA: Nick Archbold,** 53 Allanswood rd.  
Greenwood WA, 6024. Ph: 08 6262 2996, 0422 920 206

**General Editor and Publisher John Litchen.**

PO Box 3503. Robina Town Centre, QLD, 4230  
Tel: 07 5578 8748 e-mail: jllitchen@bigpond.net.au

**Registrar: Kathy McCarthy.**

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

**Webmaster: John Rockstrom.** phone: H 03 9757 2926,  
mobile 0411 115 235.

**Aikido Foundation senior teachers and advisers who hold Rokudan certification or above.**

**ACT:** Hanan Janiv. **NSW:** Andrew Dziedzic, Roger Savage, George Lo, Steven Armfield, Machiko Hirata, Wayne Sheils. **NT:** Richard Barnes, Mike Petery, Marie Petery. **QLD:** Graham Morris. **SA:** David Scott. **TAS:** Tony Smibert, John Karas. **VIC:** Robert Botterill, David Brown, Felica Birman, Ray Oldman, Geoffrey Savage, John Rockstrom, John Watson, Leon Metzeling, Brian Johns. **WA:** Hugh Derham.

**Aikido in Australia** — is the official journal of Aiki Kai (Australia):  
National Aikido Association Inc. ABN 18 611 543 976.

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

Print Post Publication number: PP424022/00903.

Address for official documents: GPO Box 2783. 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 Australian member Federation of the International Aikido Federation. 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.*



**Editor's note:**

Winter school has come and gone with attendance around 70 or so people. Below is a list of those who were promoted:

**Shodan:**

Greg Giannis (Vic)  
Travers Hughes (Qld)  
Ben Lippmeier (NSW)

**Nidan:**

Thomas Banhazi (Qld)  
Hugo Lewis (Vic)

**Sandan:**

Victor Bajanov (NSW)  
Grant Mc Guinness (NSW)  
Geffrey Sexton (Qld)

Three people from Cairns in the far north of Queensland also came down to winter school and each of them also successfully tested for 3rd kyu. Because of the difficulty in receiving senior instruction for those in Cairns a special arrangement was made for them to be tested for 3rd kyu while at winter school. It must have been nerve wracking for them but they handled themselves well. Malcolm, Judith and Dominique, congratulations...

**Ph-otos credits:**

Front and back covers,  
and pages 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,  
9, 23, by John Litchen.  
Bottom Page 3 by Gay-  
lene Webb.

Pages 12, 13, by Moona  
Perrotin.

Pages 21, 22, courtesy  
of Shin Do Kan Dojo,  
Newport Beach, Cali-  
fornia.



**TTC Weekend in Warwick with  
John Watson Sensei 6th Dan Shidoin**



The weekend of May 18th and 19th saw the Warwick Dojo host a TTC Course given by John Watson Sensei, 6th Dan, Shidoin. Aikido Students who attended came from Warwick, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

We began our weekend study with Tai No Henka, focussing on natural relaxed movement around a calm centre creating harmony from a potential conflict between two people.

Then we turned to what Sensei referred to as what Sugano Shihan called the three Pillars of Aikido: Ikkyo (and Nikkyo), Iriminage and Shihonage.

A discussion ensued regarding too great a focus on technical training, an approach which can concentrate the student's focus on technical excellence at the expense of everything else that Aikido has to offer, whereas in Sensei's view, Aikido encompasses much more than simply striving for technical expertise.

We then progressed to a study of the three aspects of kokyunage from Shomen Uchi and Yokomen Uchi found in the 2nd kyu grading syllabus.

Lunch and coffee followed at the excellent Cherry Tree Cafe. We all then returned to the dojo at 1:30!

After lunch Sensei resurrected a group of somnolent Aikidoka with San Nin Gake (3 person attack) with focus on nage using the whole mat space and choosing his/her next attacker rather than standing in one spot and waiting for Uke to come to nage. This strategy allows nage to dispense with his/her attackers one at a time and turn attention to the next Uke making an attack of many into an attack of one. It became rather clear that if nage was to stand in one spot, nage would soon be overwhelmed.

As is usual for events such as this, Ross and Kathy hosted dinner at their home following training on Saturday evening. Several attendees helped prepare salads and nibbles while Thomas from Toowoomba served up pumpkin soup sourced from Ross and Kathy's rather prolific pumpkin patch. A barbecue followed (along with roast potato and, yes, more pumpkin) and then dessert of, you guessed it, pumpkin pie and coffee. This sort of get together is a bonus at a venue like Warwick, because folk training during the day get to socialise in the evening in a warm and friendly environment allowing for discussion to range from technical to philosophical topics and general, jovial discourse. For those students staying the night it gives the weekend course the feel of a training camp where students are isolated from the usual distractions and cares of their normal environment.

Report by Ross Barrell 4th Dan.

Sunday saw us return to the mat and Sensei got us to study Ryote Dori Kokyunage with three timings using Tai Jutsu (open hand techniques) and with a Jo. The empty hand techniques required nage to turn Soto waza drawing Uke around a corner and then projecting. The Jo techniques required nage to turn in exactly the same way with the difference being, of course that the Jo added an extra dimension of distance, leverage and extension.

Following Sunday training several of the attendees adjourned for lunch prior to heading for home.





*Suwari waza kokyuhō*



*kaitenage ura*



*These images from special training day at Mudgeeraba Qld June 8th 2013.*

*iriminage*

## Why I love Aikido

by Gaylene Webb in Hobart Tasmania

I am on my way to training.

My day has been busy and I want to be on time.

I think about how the exercises at the start of class help me to slow down and think about my body.

I need to stretch.

Our teacher guides the class in such a way as to bring us together to concentrate and help us find connection.

Sometimes we are a large group other times only a few.

We are friends.

We are learning about distance timing and direction. It is a long term study.

When the class is over, we are energised and happy.

This is why I love Aikido.



**Is Aikido a Martial Art?**  
**Introduction by John Litchen to an article**  
**by John Rockstrom Sensei, 6th Dan.**



Every so often the question of whether Aikido is a martial art or a martial way crops up and there is much discussion about it. Generally those who practice Aikido consider what they do a martial art, but in fact they will most likely be wrong.

In my view Aikido is a martial way, which is a dō form and not a martial art or a fighting art which would be a jutsu form.

Jutsu is a fighting form which has been tested in battlefields and proven to work. What didn't work didn't survive because the practitioner didn't live to pass it on. What did get passed on was what enabled the teacher to survive to be able to teach the next generation. Jutsu forms are meant to maim and kill, to severely disable and to render an opponent incapable of doing you any harm. Jutsu forms are practiced with real intent so learning to defend against them meant an understanding of how they were meant to work was essential. In training and practice injuries often occurred. These are genuine fighting arts.

Dō forms are not fighting forms and are not self-defence. They are martial exercises that enable a practitioner to improve health and well-being. They may vaguely resemble the martial art from which they are derived but they are basically a means for an individual to self-improve and to adapt those improvements into everyday life.

Aikido is a martial way. It doesn't teach fighting, but rather it teaches how to avoid fighting. That is its ultimate drawcard for many people.

O Sensei grew up during a very warlike period with Japan and China at loggerheads. He was in China with the Japanese army, and later with his Omoto Kyo religious group as a bodyguard to its leader Onisaburo Deguchi. He had many opportunities to use his fighting arts to defend both himself and the people he was with at the time. He practiced and studied many jutsu forms, and at one stage called what he began teaching as Aiki jutsu or Aiki bujutsu, but this was before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, with Japan's defeat imminent, he changed his reason for training and his concept of what he was studying and teaching. He changed from a jutsu form to a dō form.

Fighting arts were banned by the occupying forces and so a dō form based on Aiki Jutsu evolved which O Sensei then called Aiki Budo before it became Aikido. There was a vast difference between the pre-war training and the post-war training, and it is the post war training that continues to evolve in many different ways. All of them however have the concept inherent in the name: The way of (Do) the blending (Ai) of energy (Ki). So the word Aikido is loosely translated as *the blending of energy; the path to follow*.

In some cases the Aikido people practice is so far removed from its martial origins it might as well be a form of calisthenics that involves two people working together.

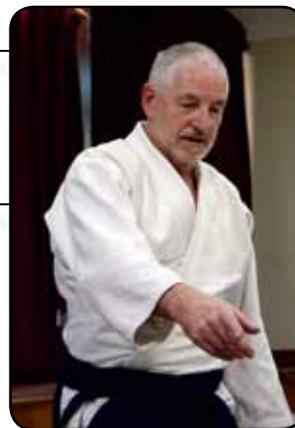
Generally however most groups around the world practicing Aikido still do it in ways that can be related back to its origins. Some are much closer than others, but all of them I think are partially deluding themselves by thinking of what they do as a martial art or an art of self-defence.

Some years ago (1997) this publication printed an article by John Rockstrom (6<sup>th</sup> Dan Shidoin) that discussed this very question much more eloquently than I could ever do, and all of what he said in that piece then is still very relevant today. There would be many new students to Aikido who would not have seen this article or who don't have access to a copy of it, as well as many longer term students who may not remember having read it, so I thought it would be timely to reprint it here once again for everyone to consider. Please turn to the next page...

## The Self-Defence of Aikido

### A personal view by John Rockstrom

*Originally written and published in 1997*



#### **Where Do I Stand?**

At the outset let me make it very clear that I do not believe in self-defence training, unless it is specifically and undeniably the purpose of the training. By this I mean that the techniques instructed are combat tested and proven and the students participating are mentally in tune with the 'real life' situations that are being taught. If you practice a knife attack, the knife is real. If you practice taking a gun, put bullets in it and cock it.

How can someone learn to defend themselves from weapons or physical aggression when they haven't experienced them in real life, learnt to understand them and are no longer intimidated by them? This issue of self-defence has come up regularly over more than thirty odd years in martial training and whenever I'm faced with the question about what to do in a certain situation: I never claim to instruct in self-defence, or for that matter, to be greatly knowledgeable about it.

#### **What Is 'Real' Self Defence?**

During my time in Japan I studied jujutsu in tandem with the martial ways. I was told to train jujutsu not for the purpose of really acquiring any sort of self-defence skill but as an aid to strengthen my mind; by practising in a combat situation. Unlike Judo, the jujutsu techniques were applied with the utmost force and realism. A blow was a blow, if you didn't defend it well, you were injured. If you mishandled a tanto, you were cut. Your life hung in the balance with every movement of your body and that of the person attacking. In this situation you can develop a combat mind. How can someone begin to understand the terror of facing a knife or a large aggressor unless they have been in the situation regularly and have come to understand their ability to handle it both mentally and physically?

#### **Who Should Teach Self Defence?**

My jujutsu teacher had an exemplary record as a policeman in Shanghai when it was an international city, in the 1930's. He is officially recorded as having defeated 10 armed men, with unarmed techniques, on many occasions he killed those he had to, injured those he wanted to incapacitate and left winded those he required for immediate questioning, such was his skill. It was a tough city in those days. I've discovered in most instances when people talk about training or instructing in self-defence they usually haven't got a clue about the subject. Generally, they are taking a 'Do' form technique and trying to build back into it the aggressive and dangerous parts that someone much more skilled than they, had earlier spent a life-time taking out! Often times many of the techniques were never true combat techniques in the first place, rather they were always a 'Do' form, with no direct application from the original bujutsu movements.

In addition, often the environment in which self-defence techniques are taught is soft, friendly and warm in a nice gym or dojo. In my opinion, altogether the wrong sort of surroundings in which to learn to defend one's life. More often self-defence is a state of mind, not a physical movement. So, we have a combination of untried or ineffectual combat

techniques instructed by someone who has rarely, if ever, had the necessity to save his own or someone else's life in truly trying circumstances. In other words, no real practical application of what he/she is demonstrating. I don't consider competition based martial ways as 'real' training either, there are too many rules and to say you understand self-defence from playing around with people at that level is more self-delusional than anything else.

#### **Saviour or Conman?**

Look at it this way. If a person comes to you and says he is a doctor, you let him treat your infected arm, which gets worse and has to be amputated. Then you find out that this person has no real medical training at all but only went to a St. John's Ambulance course, how would you feel about him? What would you call him - a fraud, a charlatan, dangerous?

I'm well aware that there are many self-defence classes being taught around Australia and the rest of the world, it's big business these days. But does that make it right? Heroin is big business, ripping off pensioners is big business.

What sort of person do you want to be?

#### **Criminal Incapacity?**

I recall a news cast on the car radio when travelling through the United States, the home of self-defence training. Two gunmen had held up a bank and a young woman, who had karate training, struck one of the robbers across the throat with a hand blade strike. I make the supposition that the girl had been told by her instructor this 'devastating technique' would fell the biggest man, effortlessly. The robber didn't die as she might have expected he just got mad and shot her dead through the head. One of our own people in Australia used to be a Los Angeles policeman. He had police combat training in Aikido and was an experienced officer. He tells the story of once, during an arrest, a man pulled a gun on him, which he instantly countered with a classic kotegaeshi. The man fell to the ground and as he was relieved of the gun in his right hand he shot the officer with the gun in his left hand. Have you ever practised a two gun takedown? Our friend hadn't either and he was police combat trained, but was fortunate enough to survive the incident and take up another, less dangerous, line of work.

#### **What then is the self-defence of Aikido?**

If you read all the classical bujutsu ryu manuscripts almost without fail the ultimate techniques are the ones where you don't fight at all. Where you don't draw your sword just because someone else has. Where you don't become embroiled in their aggression but try and maintain your own clear and calm mind. Real self-defence training is in the mind, this form of self-defence will always surpass combat techniques.

Anyone who understands fighting will avoid it at all costs. Train with the thought of not fighting at all, not with the thought of how to fight better. The basic *taisabaki* of Aikido will show students how to avoid being grabbed or struck. And, once they understand the principle of nonviolence (no confrontation) these two ideas, body and mind working together, will avoid the majority of 'attacks'. The trouble is these principles take a long time to learn. Combat training can be taught to police and soldiers in a relatively short time frame, in a very concentrated way. Which still must be practised regularly otherwise they will lose that skill —short time to learn — short time to forget.

The 'self-defence' of Aikido training takes probably a minimum of ten years to develop, if you train regularly. Twenty years of consistent training will hopefully see you with enough maturity not to want to fight or beat anyone in a fight, or to offer **suki**, an opening that will invite/attract an attack.

I often hear stories from prospective students of how they are always in fights and want to learn a method to better handle themselves. It is immediately obvious that these people are looking for the opportunity to fight and human nature is always ready to accommodate them. They unconsciously provide *suki*, opportunities or invitations in their spirit, for people to attack them. Their problem is not how to fight better but to stop wanting to fight (opening *suki*) at all. Aikido training shows them how to release their aggression and therefore they will not want to fight. Their *ki* will eventually extend outwards and no longer draw attacks.

In thirty years of training I have never had to apply a single technique in defence from a real attack. This is not to say that opportunities haven't arisen, however as fighting is not an option for me, these situations never developed into full blown attacks. Sugaño Shihan often talks about the psychological echo between people. If someone gives off aggressive vibrations and they echo off another person with a similar attitude the vibrations will magnify the aggressive attitude as they rapidly bounce between the two people and can eventuate into a fight.

### **How Can You Avoid Conflict?**

I present these next few anecdotes in the hope that they will be taken as examples that I have personally experienced and are not mistaken for grandstanding or making any unwarranted claims about my personal abilities. The first incident was during a traffic jam where another driver was not blending with the traffic and was rudely trying to force his car into my lane directly in front of me. I ignored his attempt to push in, he kept forcing and we gently collided. I was furious, he had damaged my precious car and he was a total jerk to boot! We found a place to pull over and charged out of our cars in a fury. I looked at his face and it was contorted and ugly with rage and I stopped, my face must appear the same to him. This was not what I had been training to do for fifteen years. I was a disgrace to my instructor to have so completely lost my control and I instantly lost my battle rage.

Unfortunately the fellow hadn't and still came at me in full fury. I don't remember much about what happened next except that I somehow engaged him in conversation. I remember distinctly my knees trembling uncontrollably; I could see some workmen watching us with amused interest as the two of us stood in the middle of the pavement arguing. All this was very clear to me as I tried to reason with him about what was occurring. I called him and myself 'bloody

idiots' for having put ourselves in this ridiculous situation and slowly he calmed down. I also clearly remember placing my hand on his arm as if to reassure him that there was no threat from me. Physical contact had been made and no damage had happened, but it was the contact that made the difference, I was no longer a threatening stranger but a person who was in friendly contact with him. The calming physical contact was important.

Finally we shook hands and as no damage had been done called it quits. We didn't part friends, but at least we hadn't injured each other. His final comment to me was "You were lucky. I was going to head butt you into next week!" Head butt!? I realised that in talking to him I had been easily within range, bad *maai* and who trains how to avoid head butts? In choosing not to fight perhaps I had saved myself from serious injury. Certainly the reason to fight was not valid and any injury resulting from it would have been simply stupid. (As a side note, Botterill Shihan recently presented an article in the 2013 Special Collector's Edition of *Blitz* magazine, utilising a similar soft approach but showing how, if things turn bad, to use Aikido to neutralise the aggression at this very close *maai*.)

The second incident is more face saving and cannot be duplicated in any self-defence class. I was walking in the Kangaroo Valley area of Brisbane at early evening looking for an address and to someone watching me it was obvious I was stranger and somewhat lost. As I approached a corner to wait for the traffic lights to change I felt myself mentally 'tagged' by an unknown person, it was as if someone had physically tapped me on the back of the head. The impression of the person's thoughts on me was very strong and threatening. To test the theory that someone was 'following' me I abruptly changed direction and crossed the road. I could feel the person crossing behind me but as there was a crowd I couldn't determine who it was exactly. The moment I got to the footpath I spun around and recrossed the road back to the side I'd started from. At this point only one person, a youngish male was crossing with me. I had found my man. It struck me as dumb that he still followed, hadn't I given him enough signals to let him know I knew he was there? When I reached the curb I immediately doubled back again and still he followed, despite being well and truly uncovered. Now I was stuck, what to do? In front of me was the main one way road that cuts through the Valley and it was empty of traffic at that moment because of a red light further along. There was nothing else for it, confrontation was obviously not avoidable. If I ran, my back would be exposed, so the only option was to face this person and see if face-to-face contact would put him off.

It was not my preferred option by a long shot, but there just didn't seem to be too many others. In hindsight twenty years on I should have gone into a store or a cafe somewhere where there was plenty of people and waited it out. On this night though I stepped out into the middle of the main, well-lit road and turned to look at my aggressor. I didn't know what he had in store for me but whatever it was he was going to have to do it in front of a whole lot of witnesses. He had just followed me onto the road before I turned and he stopped when I did. There we were like some *Kurasawa* movie, eyeing each other off, about three metres apart. However, in this case so was a whole roadway full of cars which were now bearing down on us from the lights. The question was, who's going to get me first the mugger or the

traffic? The hardest part was to keep my eyes on the mugger and not be concerned with the traffic speeding toward me from the rear. The bright lights of the cars were on his face and in his eyes. Finally, after what seemed three lifetimes the man gave a small chuckle, turned, stepped off the roadway and disappeared into the shadows of the street.

Who knows what the outcome might have been if I'd stopped to fight. He might have had a knife, a gun, two guns or even a double head butt. My jujutsu instructor in Japan always said, "In a fight you have a 50/50 chance. Don't fight unless it is absolutely necessary and then fight with the mind of a beginner."

### **Will You Destroy Or Build The Beginners Mind?**

Again, this is a lesson from the past. The Beginners Mind is both a commencing state and the final state of mind in martial training. When someone has no training they react instinctively, unconsciously without thought of what they should be doing or how they should be doing it. Whatever they do, it comes naturally. Once they begin to train their mind becomes clogged with the conscious thought process of this or that technique against this or that attack. They no longer respond instinctively, rather, they are trying to compute all the permutations they've been taught, with the outcome that they are slow to react and clumsy in the application of the movement. As techniques are practised over a period of time, the student no longer has to consider the ins and outs of them and ultimately the physical nature of the technique is 'forgotten' entirely. The student turns full circle to the Beginners Mind again where nothing is anticipated and no reaction planned, all happens naturally in accord with the much higher capacity of unconscious thought.

I look at it this way. If you wash the rear windscreen of your car you will have a clear vision of what has gone on behind you, in other words, your past, and therefore anything you are reacting to is already too late in most cases. This is my view of 'self-defence' as it is mostly taught today. You are reacting to (fighting) a situation that is already unfolding and thereby you have lost control of that situation. On the other hand if you wash the whole car your vision will be perfectly clear all around you and the car will be totally clean, protected and renewed. You have a comprehensive view of all that is happening around you and therefore can make better judgements of 'safe' alternatives before the incident occurs. This is my metaphor for the self-defence of Aikido. It takes longer to wash the whole car than just the back window but it is a more complete and rewarding task.

It's my belief that we have more than enough to do trying to pass on what little we understand about Aikido without side tracking ourselves in unproductive areas such as self-defence. Instruct Aikido as well as you can, with sincerity to what you have learnt from Sugano Shihan and the ideals that have been imparted to you. In this fashion you will assist and benefit many more people than you could have thought possible. Because if the people who study with you help other people and their students help even more people to better their lives through training then the chain that was created by O Sensei will continue indefinitely in an ever widening circle. Don't be side-tracked, stick to the Way and eventually self-defence will take its place in the natural scheme of things.

The ancient adage, which is still as true today, when you don't understand something about martial training - train harder! The answer is always in the training.

### **Who Am I To Tell You What To Do?**

As I read what I have written it embarrasses me, my own immaturity is obvious to the reader and who am I to preach on what others should do? The words demonstrate my own internal conflict in coming to grips with what is the True Way. I offer you my thoughts and feelings about this subject because I have strong opinions in this area. I'm not saying self-defence, as such, can't be taught but you'd better be really sure you have the right knowledge and the right attitude to teach it properly.

Sugano Shihan never taught self-defence, he taught Aikido, which is an entirely different beast. He always said if you become obsessed with self-defence you're concentrating on just a very small part of the whole training and it will prevent you from understanding the much bigger and more important aspects. It interrupts the flow of movement to concentrate on hitting someone.

(2013 - **Please don't anyone suddenly attack me in the dojo** to see if my awareness is at the level I outlined in the story above. How that happened I have no idea and if you jump me in the dojo I might get seriously hurt!

Since writing this article fifteen years ago, not a lot has changed in my attitude towards self-defence training. What I have heard are situations that have occurred to students where they were attacked without provocation or warning and managed to avoid being struck just by moving naturally using Tai Sabaki. In most instances they don't even remember having moved and often the aggressor lost interest once the first blow had missed. The students instinctively used the naturalness of Aikido, without the need to reply to the aggression. )



John Rockstrom Sensei in 2012 enjoying his TTC at the Gold Coast.



***Ni No Ken***

Ross Barrell is manabite.  
June 2012 at Mudgeeraba, Gold Coast.



It begins with Manabite breaking maei (above left). When Oshiete moves back to create an opening Manabite attacks with shomen uchi. This is mirrored with shomen uchi from Oshiete causing Manabite to step back. Oshiete then drops bokken and enters with tsuki. Manabite again steps back to parry by changing hanmi, and then extending forward with tsuki makes Oshiete step back.

The final step is both move back, Oshiete attacks. Manabite steps offline and cuts shomen to finish as shown below.



## *...like an old pair of shoes...*

*by John Litchen*

Does your aikido fit you comfortably, to use the analogy like an old pair of shoes?

Like an old pair of shoes that have become moulded to the shape of your feet so you feel they are part of you and you don't even notice you are wearing them not long after putting them on. It does feel like that sometimes, doesn't it? How about an old jacket that has been a favourite for years? Same thing, you feel comfortable and relaxed wearing it don't you?

When you've been practicing Aikido for some length of time—and this varies depending on how many days a week or a month you train, and what level of rank you have attained—let's say 15 years or more, it is very easy to fall into comfortable patterns that you can do without having to think about what you are doing. You see the teacher demonstrate something familiar, such as shihonage, and immediately your body memory or your muscle memory takes over. Your mind switches off. *I know this*, you think. *I've been doing this for years*. You slip into it without being aware of whether you are actually doing anything at all.

Uke as well, falls into the same comfortable groove, following and falling down when it is expected. He doesn't concern himself either with whether the technique is being done properly, if his balance has been taken so he can't recover or counter. He just goes through the motion and falls over. He doesn't even count the number of turns; he automatically takes the role of Nage when the required number has been done. And of course Nage switches roles and walks through the grabbing and falling down role.

At the end of the session they smile at each other and perhaps think they have had some good practice.

Well they may have, but they certainly were not training. They were wearing their Aikido like you do a comfortable old pair of shoes when you go for a long walk.

They didn't look to see if the instructor did the technique differently, or if he added some other dimension to it by incorporating a leg sweep at the end of the ura turn, or if he changed the maai to take Uke's balance in a more determined way. Did they see whether the instructor stepped forward to turn from an omote position or did he turn on the spot and cut down, without stepping forward which often allows Uke to recover his balance, giving him the possibility of doing kaeshiwaza? Did they see if while leading Uke forwards the instructor stepped across diagonally to take Uke past his back to continue him along the attacking line before making him fall? What did they see?

Most likely they saw the technique without actually looking carefully at it, without looking at it as if seeing it for the very first time. The moment they saw that it was shihonage their minds automatically told them that they knew this and so they stopped seeing it and when it came time to practice they walked through it without learning anything but more importantly without studying it.



It is absolutely necessary to look carefully. Seeing the overall movement of the technique is fine to begin with, but unfortunately too many of us stop looking at this point and therefore miss the subtleties that the teacher wants us to see. The only reason the teacher or the instructor demonstrates the technique three, four or more times at varying speeds is so we can see different aspects of what is being shown.

Here are at least four things to consider while watching.

1. The overall appearance and the flow of movement.
2. Look at the feet and how they are used to enter, and then look at the hands and the rest of the demonstrator's body. Look at how they are used simultaneously with the entering. Look at how Uke was cut down... was it from behind, the side or in front?

3. Look at the way principles such as harmonizing, leading, redirecting, and unbalancing are utilized to put Uke into an unrecoverable position from which ukemi must be taken. Think about the fact that they are separate discrete parts but must combine to create the whole technique throughout its application.

4. Finally once again look at the whole to see how the above are all integrated into the technique and in fact are the technique.

By the time you see it for the fourth time you should have a much better idea of what is expected and what you need to do to make it work.

Each time you have a different Uke you have an opportunity to study the technique anew because it will be different on many levels. Your new partner is not the same as your previous one. Body size and weight will be different. Movement will be different, faster or slower, stronger or weaker.

Every time you change partners there is a different dynamic, a different flow of energy, and the sensitive student will feel this and be aware of it and constantly adjust what he or she does to take these ongoing variations into account. This is why we change partners; so we can actually study how the technique is physically different to varying degrees with each different Uke while still utilizing the same principles.

It is very difficult if not impossible to capture the mindset you had when you first saw Aikido or when you first saw a specific technique and were absolutely astonished at how it worked. But this is what we all must try and do no matter what technique we practice or how many times we may have



done it over the years. Each time we have to try and see it as if for the first time— see the elements that make it what it is, see what makes it work, where the fine points are, how the principles of maai, irimi, musubi, Kuzushi, leading and creating a space for Uke to fall into are utilized to make the technique work. Uke lends you his body to do this and in turn you lend Uke your body for the same reason.

In reality you cannot replicate the feeling you had when you saw it the first time, but you must try to combine your experience of the years of practice with the feeling of wonder that you had at the very beginning, and analyse the technique as you do it, study how it works in application, how your body reacts, how Uke's body reacts, and in your mind break it down into the parts that make it whole as you do it. One further consideration is to think that you only have once chance to get the technique right and you must do that the first time. This will make you focus more and bring everything together as you do it.

You should never simply walk though it, or go through the motions pretending you are doing something. If that is how you train then go for a walk wearing that comfortable old pair of shoes instead.



please note message from  
National Area Representative  
Andrew Dziejczak  
regarding updates to  
Aiki Kai Australia Insurance Policy...

## Great news for all our members

At the initiative of the Board of Aiki Kai Australia, our personal insurance cover has been upgraded as from 13 October 2013. This relates in the main to claims made by members who wish to claim for expenses not at all covered by Medicare or by any personal health insurance cover, as well as some extra benefits. This means, for example, that up to \$3,000 can be claimed for any one claim for expenses (such as physiotherapy) which are not at all covered by Medicare, and which are not covered by any personal insurance cover. Previously this sort of claim was limited to \$1,000.

There are other more minor benefits, such as a weekly student allowance of up to \$200, and other benefits, the full details of which will be supplied to each Area Representative in each state & territory.

This has been possible by the success of Aiki Kai Australia in managing its finances and events, and was driven by an awareness of the previously more modest nature of our cover.

I have set out a summary of the main benefits under the new policy, compared to those under the old.

Schedule of new personal insurance benefits (compared to old)

### Death and Capital Benefits (1)– \$100,000 (previously \$30,000)

**Weekly Injury– 80% of income up to \$1,000 (unchanged)**

**Excess Period– 14 days (unchanged)**

**Benefit Period– 52 weeks (unchanged)**

### Non Medicare Medical Expenses (2)–Maximum \$3,000 (previously \$1,000)

**Excess– \$50 each and every claim (unchanged)**

**Age Limits– 3 – 80 years**

(1) This relates to the maximum pay-out for death or total and permanent disability, with a downward descending sliding scale for coverage for loss of use of part/s of the body.

(2) This coverage is only available in respect of which Medicare provides no benefit, and which is not covered by any private health insurance cover held.

While this cover is enhanced, it still may not be adequate for your circumstances, especially if you need better income protection insurance or cover for injury or disability beyond that provided under the cover provided in this policy. For example, this cover in no way provides anything like proper cover in case of long-term serious disability or long-term loss of income for most business owners and even less so for professionals.

It still of course remains crucial that all accidents be notified to me in accord with the well-established current procedure, using the Accident Reporting Package on the Aiki Kai Australia web-site, so that any possible claims are notified to the insurer, and that any subsequent claims be lodged within 90 days of the accident. Failure to do so may result in the rejection of the claim.

If you have any queries in relation to the terms of the policy, you can obtain a copy from your state or territory Area Rep, and I am happy to answer any queries.

Andrew Dziejczak

## Fighting Cancer with Aikido by Moona Perrotin

*The story of how Dominique Perrotin rebounded from near death by cancer.*



Objective: Promoting Aikido for health and well-being  
Do you know someone who has suffered cancer? Are they still alive?

Do they have the Ki?

Dominique is a great example of someone who has the Ki.

In 2009 he got diagnosed with a cancer that was supposedly eminently treatable: Thyroid Cancer.

By the end of that week he had both thyroids removed and surrounding tissue as well.

We had spent a year in Germany where we both had been training in Iaido, The Way of the Sword. We decided that now he had the scar to prove he was a true warrior!

Not long after, though, he felt a bump growing on his thigh. Not big, not painful, but he had it removed, fearing it might grow into an unsightly bigger lump.

It was sent off to the lab and a report came back that he had a *Merkel Cell Carcinoma*. What is that? Google said it was a vicious form of skin cancer with very slim chances of surviving 5 years.

Thanks to private health cover and a prestigious rare cancer to work on the specialists set to work.

The cancer was removed leaving a 20 cm scar on his right thigh. Following that the surgeon removed 15 lymph nodes from his groin.

That turned into a real disability. Firstly it left an awkward bulge filled with lymph fluid right in the groin, secondly the leg started swelling with lymph fluid and became heavy.

It was a big blow for an active person. Dominique had taught Taekwondo for 18 years, he was a runner, he was moving like a dancer when painting houses. How he explains it is that he moves with the Ki, using the paint roller as he does a bokken.

He took to the pool. He did laps, swam 3000 metres a day. That helped a bit with the lymph drainage. He started a course in bookkeeping. It had been his idea to buy a Jim's Cleaning franchise after the first few operations.

By the time we had the franchise set up he could no longer work.

But he did not want sympathy. He did not identify with the sickness.

No yellow armband, no obvious headscarf, no joining cancer support groups.

He was not considering being 'a cancer victim' a hero status. Dominique came up with a formula for survival:  $F+F+F=S$ . Meaning—Faith plus Family plus Friends equals Strength.

He underwent the whole slash and burn approach of modern medicine:

Operation, Radiation, Operation, Chemotherapy, Operation, Chemotherapy.

Pulmonary emboli. He spent weeks in Townsville and many more in Brisbane. He had his body in with the doctors, like the car with a trusted mechanic. Everybody wants to be an expert with cancer. We received a lot of advice from people who soon died. Eat only raw foods. Subscribe to an alkaline diet. Become vegan! To the contrary he ate well. He ate a balanced, hearty diet with plenty of protein, supplemented with Biodynamic whole milk and large serves of yoghurt.

He was always wearing a pressure stocking – even in the swimming pool. With the last desperate operation in 2011 they finally fixed the bulge in his groin. They pumped that much poison through him that he very barely survived.

When I picked him up at Cairns airport he was being wheeled out in a wheelchair. His hair thin, his skin white and brittle. His mind was together.

He was alive, just.

Rehab was a walk around the house. Every week a little more. Christmas came. We drove to Cape Tribulation (apt name that) and rested in a beach bungalow for a week. Out of this world, tropical rain, tropical rainforest, ocean, good food and company at the café. We even managed several outings to restaurants and tourist spots.

Rest, fresh air, good food, Reiki.

I had taken courses in Reiki I and II. Initially, having to run a business, looking after a sick man, I needed relief which I sought through massage and Reiki.

It was good for me, so I convinced Dominique to go as well.

That night we were going out with a group of Masonic friends. There was a belly dancer and not long and Dominique was up on the stage dancing, too!

3 months after the last lot of Chemo Dominique was still feeling pain in his abdomen and he was scared to go to the check-up alone. We went together to Brisbane and saw his



*Dominique and Judith*



specialists again. Dr Manwaring, the oncologist, is also a Francophile. I asked him if the pills I was taking to increase my stamina would be ok for Dominique to take. He said, yes, if they did not cost too much..... I also told him about the Reiki we were channeling into him.

The whole meeting was positive; the scan showed that the cancer was gone!

Big smiles!

Back home our friend the Reiki teacher invited us to a sacred circle dance, Buddhist in origin. The teacher was Italian with a thick accent and he kept singing ahhh at every step. The movement, though intricate, was slower than Tai Chi, and both feet stayed on the ground.

After a whole weekend of moving in slow motion on a coloured mandala Dominique felt the possibility dawning of maybe being able to recommence Aikido, his preferred martial art. He could at least get involved in some way.

But there was no Aikikai in Cairns. Ki-Aikido was the group he had previously made contact with, but it had not gelled for him.

But lo-and- behold, not long after the weekend of the Chakra Dance he found a note advertising an Aiki Kai Dojo, the one officially opened by Graham Morris Sensei!

The tall slim New Zealander Alex Fredrickson who established the dojo was teaching. Dominique and Alex became buddies. He had fun in the dojo.

For his birthday I said to him, "now that you are clear of cancer go to Japan. That was a childhood dream of yours, yet un-realised."

Without great ado he wrote to Saito Sensei in Iwama who accepted him as Uchideshi that August in spite of having outlined his physical limitations.

He also discovered the new bike he had bought before his last operation because he wanted to be fit again! He rode and walked and watched his diet.

Thus he lost 15 kilos and re-built his fitness.

The first week in Iwama, the famous centre of learning, the Mecca of Aikido, was hard. All Dominique got from Sensei was a yelled Dammé! But he persisted and at the end of the week he was called Dominique –San! It was summer in Japan, hot and humid. There were not many students so Dominique-San was privileged to receive a private lesson every morning by Saito Sensei himself.

This experience of being taught by a master and in the birthplace of Aikido, living together with other dedicated Aikidoka from around the globe gave Dominique back a Lust for Life.

Then came the big blow.

I had to tell him that Alex was leaving Australia to join his girlfriend in Germany.

Who would take over the Dojo?

Alex said that you and Malcolm can take over.

And Dominique had no doubt that they could, even though neither of them had a 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu yet.

But Dominique had the teaching experience and success after 18 years of teaching Taekwondo. Malcolm had the University connection to source students. Judith is dedicated and a great teacher and administrator.

Together they were the 3 Musketeers whose objective it was to bring Aikido alive in Cairns.

This was now Dominique's bigger picture. Make the Universal Energy flow in Cairns, get a thriving Dojo to implement the teaching.

Parts of which are:

The power of the breath

Linking Heaven and Earth

Misogi

Being centred and relaxed

By practising these four powers Dominique is now happy and healthy again!

His ambition is to have so many active members that they will need a bigger dojo in Cairns. Their group has doubled in numbers since Alex left and is attracting new members including four Japanese students!

Photos and text © 2013 Moona Perrotin



## Noteworthy News...

### ***Aikido NSW awarded Youth Grant for Granville Dojo***

Aikido NSW was recently awarded a grant by Parramatta League to enable Aikido NSW to offer a program to unite culturally and linguistically diverse youth in the western suburbs through a course of aikido lessons at the Granville Dojo. The program seeks to build strong and lasting bridges in a practical way among local youth.

While many provided valuable assistance, the majority of work and planning was provided by Sensei Andrew Dziedzic (Aiki Kai Australia National Area Representative) and Youz Iqbal, the dojo head of Granville dojo. Both Andrew Sensei and Youz spent countless hours writing submissions and liaising with important members of the local community to bring this dream of providing a peaceful way for local youth to come together through the practice of aikido.

All of their hard work and commitment culminated on Friday 27 September in an aikido demonstration at the Granville dojo for senior members of the Sudanese and Tongan community and their youth.

There was significant interest in the program and we are hopeful that the program will attract strong participation over time and contribute to a strong and united community.

We thank both Andrew Sensei and Youz Iqbal for their generosity and perseverance in pursuing this important contribution to our youth.

Classes for the Youth Project will commence in early October so keep an eye out for details as I am sure Youz and Andrew Sensei would appreciate your assistance at the classes.



Seen in this example of Kokyunage there is a clear distinction between an advanced approach and a level more suitable for a less experienced student who is still a kyu grade. Above is an example strictly for senior students.

In the advanced examples above and below with Jikou Sugano as Nage we clearly see he has complete control of Uke and it is he who determines the speed and method Uke will use to receive.

*In this case a breakfall.*

With the other pair we have a kyu grade who is an older person and Nage has kindly allowed her Uke to determine his own response which is suited to his ability and age. She has allowed him to flow with the movement, letting him turn to take a forward roll. *This allows him to build confidence in his*



A comment from the Editor  
on different levels of training



*ability to control his receiving.*

These two examples exemplify what should be happening during any training session whether it is at a national school (*as it was here in 2009*) or in a regular class situation. Training should always be adjusted or tuned to the ability of the less experienced partners, which allows them to experience and learn within their capabilities while not forcing them to do something they are unprepared for or simply not experienced enough to be able to do.

Unfortunately too often a senior student will not adjust application to the level of a newer or less experienced partner and injuries result, or the less experienced partner loses interest in training because of what is felt as bullying by a senior student. Certainly it is okay to push the limits a bit, so the

student is encouraged to try harder to get out of a comfort zone, but there must be a limit as to how far this goes.

Too far and the student is put off and won't come back. That would certainly happen if students are injured as a result of being taken beyond their abilities. For the student to enjoy the training sufficient care must always be exercised along with an appropriate level of training for all students, no matter what their level of understanding and experience.

If students do not enjoy the training they won't come back. It is the responsibility of every individual to make sure that every partner during training enjoys what they are doing. Enjoyment fosters learning and a desire to come back to learn more. No matter what level we have attained we all need to look after our juniors as they represent the future.



## Insights Gained At Aikido Tony Smibert

I'm still surprised at the number of interesting people you find studying Aikido. Aikidoka *joke* about being 'eccentrics who get a buzz out being thrown around the room', but the fact is that Aikido does seem to attract a large number of people who get a real buzz out of being thoroughly engaged in *life*.

Aikido is more than a physical activity, and you can't simply describe it as a 'spiritual' one either. It's a sort of life *affirming* activity I guess - where you can roll up to the dojo tired, but will almost always leave thoroughly invigorated. At the same time, it's a deeply intellectual pursuit - but one where 'intellectual' thinking doesn't help very much, because you have to go with the moment and take things on trust, rather than logic.

I recently encountered a short review of a book called *The Chimp Paradox* by a sports psychologist, who (if I understand correctly) suggests that we all have three types of natural thinking processes built in. The first he calls 'monkey brain', which is type of primitive/instinctive thinking. This may, for example, cause us to grab the wrist of uke and pull (rather than extend out and lead) when doing *ai hanmi katate dori irimi nage* for the first few times. (Instinct sort of insists we do so.) The second thinking process he describes as 'human brain'. This occurs when we logically deduce a better process of action - perhaps because we've discovered that grabbing-and-pulling doesn't work in *irimi nage* or, after watching an instructor demonstrate a better way - we then direct our body to do something better, but *consciously*. (Irimi nage suddenly works.) The third and final thinking process is called 'computer brain'. This happens as a result of programming, so that thinking is less consciously undertaken where *irimi nage* is concerned, and just *is*. In Aikido we acquire this programming through ongoing training on a regular basis, and the key to it is *repetition* (should I repeat that?), until the processes of *irimi nage* may come to feel just as natural to you as walking does.

I find that very interesting, because it seems to lead towards a better understanding of Aikido and how to *teach* Aikido. It also relates to my other art practice, which is painting - and particularly in watercolour. Watercolour is all about being in harmony with your medium, and the only

way to reach that highly desirable state of mind is through lots and lots of painting. Lots of it! And a practical understanding of Aikido principles is a great way to come to the sort of harmonious processing that will absolutely help in creative watercolour.

So, while I may look around at Aikido and *not* find the dojo filled with countless watercolourists, I *do* find it filled with lots of very interesting people who are similarly finding parallels between Aikido training and the other things they are doing. Over the years I've encountered numerous highly intelligent *and* engaged people not only up to their ears in Aikido, but also deeply immersed in studies, activities and professions that they say are greatly complemented by Aikido.

It seems that Aikido is an 'insight-inducing-activity' (a phrase I just made up). OSensei used to talk about '*takemusu aiki*', which Sugano Sensei once explained to me meant a *creative process*, and certainly not fixed. Those who remember Sensei personally will also know how he did not want his own Aikido to be seen as 'fixed'. (Perhaps this was why he resisted film-making in the early days, but seemed happy enough to be filmed later on when it was perfectly clear that his Aikido was very much evolving, and there was no danger of it being seen as anything than a creative evolution over time).

So, when we look around and find our dojos full of creative thinkers - not just 'creatives' in the popular jargon of the art and advertising worlds - but truly *creative people* and working in careers where original thinking is just as vital as in the arts we should not be surprised.

In this issue, I want to introduce a short article by Tammy Kohn, of Melbourne University who is a leading academic and anthropologist as well as a long term Aikido trainee and, at time of writing, about to head off to Japan to undertake a unique project involving Melbourne University research to be conducted within the dojo at Hombu.

I'll leave it to Tammy to explain her field and project. In closing this introduction, I'm hoping that others will allow us to co-opt them into Newsletter articles sharing how Aikido may be giving them a unique angle or insight into fields of endeavour outside the dojo.

## The Aikidemic and the Sounds and Silences of Aikido Training in Japan... by Tamara Kohn

*Thank you, Tony, for your lovely introduction to this short piece that introduces me (the 'aikidemic') and my latest 'aikidemic' project (hehe, this is a snazzy term I just cooked up for this occasion)!*

I was born and raised in the US, and studied to be a socio-cultural anthropologist in the US and the UK. I got my doctorate (D.Phil.) from Oxford University in 1988 based on 3 years of fieldwork on a Scottish Hebridean Island, and then conducted 2 years of post-doctoral research in East Nepal with a tribal group called the Yakha. I then taught anthropology for many years in England (Oxford and Durham). It was there (20 years ago) that I started aikido in my early 30s (when my son was just a baby) with Arthur Lockyear

Sensei who was one of Kazuo Chiba Shihan's early students in the Northeast of England. I received my Shodan in 1998 and my Nidan in 2003 with Chiba Sensei, and he tested me for fukushidoin in 2005. I co-ran a small dojo in Durham, England for 7 years until I left the UK for a new academic job at Melbourne University in Australia. I joined the Australian Aikikai in January 2006 and train regularly now in Melbourne (Clifton Hill and Brunswick). I also travel a lot for work and pleasure and I have been fortunate to train in many countries with many fine teachers.

Anthropology involves in depth study of different communities and ways of life. The long fieldwork projects I conducted in rural Nepal and the Scottish Isles focused on

identity, movement and change. With my love for aikido training and deep commitment to my ever-growing family of aikidoka around the world (Europe, the US, Australia, Japan), I have found a way to extend these interests and explore important theoretical ideas about the body, communities of practice, discipline, spirituality, etc through working with the aikido community. I have also been able to convince academic colleagues that publications stemming from my work and training in aikido are contributing in important ways to the humanistic study of social life and interaction.

In 2000 I spent 3 months training full time as a short-term kenshusei with Chiba Sensei in San Deigo Aikikai as well as with Coryl Crane Sensei. In Dec 2007 I visited Hombu dojo as part of a 6-week research trip to Japan and was kindly given permission for my work which at that stage focused on how foreign practitioners experienced training in Japan. Now, at Melbourne, I am involved in a couple different new research projects and one of these allows me to return in just a few days (at the time of writing) to Japan!

This new collaborative research project has received national funding (Australian Research Council) to study sound in Japan. The project is called: Sonic Practice in Japan: sound in everyday life. The work involves examining the role that sound (and silence) plays in urban Japan, particularly after the earthquake of 2011. We believe that sounds are deeply meaningful, particularly in crowded cities, and the way they are produced and received is important to know in order to understand how relationships between people and their environments are experienced. I'm working with Japan specialists – Professor Carolyn Stevens from Monash Uni will be collecting sounds and interviews in busy urban public spaces like train stations; Dr Richard Chenhall (Melbourne Uni) is working with people in support groups and the way sound is woven into Naikan therapy; Professor Ted Bestor (Harvard Uni) works on Tsukiji fish market, Prof Hosokawa (Nichi-bunken, Kyoto) is involved with music practice communities.

My own contribution will be to contribute data on the sound and silence of dojo spaces in Tokyo and Kyoto. I'm interested in understanding the degree to which practitioners value the sonic space of the dojo, how they read meanings (specialised for training or others) in the sounds and silences in the dojo environment. I know that the sound of dedicated training is distinctive, and 'read' by Senseis and students (just as the sound of bokken in contact can tell more than the sight). But I also think that there is something about the sonic environment of places like Hombu that offers an embodied respite from the rush and tumble of increasingly crowded and noisy spaces that people traverse in the city. One can only know the variety of meanings imbedded in sound by training, listening and talking to others.

I will only be in Japan for 3 weeks for this trip, arriving on Sept 25th and leaving on Oct 14th, and I will be in Hombu for the first week and the third week of the stay, and in Kyoto (training with Yoko Okamoto Sensei) for one week in the middle. I've also had permission to stay at Iwama for two days and one night.

In these various dojos I will train daily as well as quietly watching and listening to some classes. I know that taking notes and taking photos in class is not generally permitted, but I have permission to unobtrusively record some clips of dojo training sounds on a digital recorder that can later be played back and commented on. Some of these recordings will be useful for eventual analysis and writing, while some

will contribute to a growing Digital Sound Repository called 'Living Sounds in Japan' that we are developing on the internet. I will be inviting a sample of people who train regularly to talk to me at their convenience about their training and their thoughts about the impact of city sounds and dojo sounds on their everyday lives.

The project is a valuable one, both for the academy and for the aikido community. Understanding the relationship between sound and society has important practical applications for urban design in increasingly populated spaces. Our joint work looks at several sound related issues, ranging from disaster management to sound pollution to community safety and personal wellbeing. It exposes details about Japanese culture and social relations through a collaborative international project. The project also contributes greatly to my own life commitment to understanding aikido as a student (of the art) and a scholar. A considerable number of my publications look at aikido practice and practitioners (I include a list of some of these below, and I am happy to provide copies for anyone interested in reading them). Chiba Sensei was always very supportive of my academic writing work because he felt that I was exposing aikido to readers who would never have otherwise encountered the art (unlike the many popular martial arts books and magazines that are read by people already in the fold). This new project will be very productive in terms of publications, workshops and collaborative future project work. I would hope that the work we do will reveal and analyse the power of silence and sound in martial training space within the larger soundscapes of the city.

Tammy (Tamara Kohn) (Sept 22, 2013)

#### Selected 'Aikidemic' publications:

2011 KOHN, T. Appropriating an Authentic Bodily Practice from Japan: on 'being there', 'having been there' and 'virtually being there'. In Strang, V. & Busse, M. (eds), *Ownership and Appropriation* (ASA monograph), Oxford and New York: Berg Press, 65-85.

2011 KOHN, T. Gravity and Grace: A study of martial movement and discourse. In Hage, G. & E. Kowal (eds), *Force, Movement, Intensity: the Newtonian Imagination in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Melbourne University Press, 40-52.

2011 KOHN, T. New Ways to Frame an Answer to 'Where did you do your fieldwork?' In Coleman, S. and P. Collins (eds), *Dislocating Anthropology?: Bases of Longing and Belonging in the Analysis of Contemporary Societies*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 81-95.

2010 KOHN, T. Iaido, Aikido and the Other. In Priest, G. & Young, D. (eds), *Martial Arts and Philosophy*. Chicago, United States: Open Court, 117-128.

2008 KOHN, T. Creatively sculpting the self through the discipline of martial arts training. In Dyck, N. (ed) *Exploring Regimes of Discipline: The Dynamics of Restraint*, Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 99-112.

2007 KOHN, T. Bowing onto the Mat: Discourses of Change through Martial Arts Practice. In Coleman, S. & KOHN, T. (eds) *The Discipline of Leisure: embodying cultures of 'recreation'*, Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 171-186.

2007 Coleman, S. and T. KOHN, T. The Discipline of Leisure: Taking Play Seriously. In Coleman, S. & T. KOHN (eds) *The Discipline of Leisure: embodying cultures of 'recreation'*, Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 1-19. (50% co-author of chapter with colleague).

2003 KOHN, T. The Aikido Body: Expressions of Group Identities and Self-discovery in Martial Arts Training, in N. Dyck and E.P. Archetti (eds) *Sport, Dance and Embodied Identities*, Oxford: Berg Press, 139-155.

2001 KOHN, T. 'Don't Talk – Blend': Ideas about body and communication in aikido practice, in J. Hendry and B. Watson (eds) *An Anthropology of Indirect Communication* (ASA volume), London: Routledge, 163-178.



*Years ago, I asked Sugano Sensei about the how I might best learn calligraphy.*

*He suggested two ways:*

*I could either learn to write Japanese or he could show me the characters for ai ki do and I could practice those for the rest of my life.*

*Photo by Hugh Derham Sensei*

*Our Editor, John Litchen, has proposed a publication for the upcoming 50th Anniversary that will bring together lots of people's reflections on how Aikido and contact with Sugano Sensei enhanced their lives and careers. In the light of Tammy Kohn's article, I thought I might volunteer some thoughts about the connection between my own life as a painter and life in Aikido.*

*Since it seems to me that they are very much connected and that my activity and philosophy as a painter is very similar to my practice and philosophy in Aikido I thought the following article I wrote about 'balance' for a well-known artist magazine some years back might also be of interest to Aikido readers. There, I was writing about the need for committed painters in watercolour to find a personal balance within the challenges and chaos of everyday life, but was putting forward an approach which comes from 'Aikido thinking'.*

*Because I make my living by painting but don't earn money from Aikido, like lots of people in Aikido here, I also have to balance the demands of involvement in training, teaching, Aikikai Australia and the International Aikido Federation with my artist-life - including the essential work that has to be done to make a living from it. And because I'm deeply committed to Aikido this isn't always sensible in a business sense and I'm constantly wrestling with how to achieve a reasonable 'balance' between Aikido, art and the rest of my life.*

*While I could have changed a few words here and there to turn this into an article about Aikido, I'm hoping it may just help to spur more people to contribute something to the Newsletter about how Aikido plays a part in their own lives and careers too (please read Tammy Kohn's article on pages 16 and 17). I hope it makes sense; I wrote it because I was so impressed by the following comments by Lama Zopz Rinpoche.*

*Whatever work you do, there are two things to learn. The first is how to do the actual work, how to do your job, which is what you learn in school and college.*

*This is what most people in the world are educated to do. But that alone is not sufficient... That is nowhere near enough to ensure that your actions serve as an unmistakable cause of happiness. Simply knowing how to do your job never solves your problems completely.*

*Neglecting inner education, which teaches you the attitude with which you should perform tasks and how to live your life, and focussing on outer education alone brings neither satisfaction nor fulfilment to your heart.*

*It is of the utmost importance that you understand how to use your mind correctly when you do the things you do. Internal work – how to use your mind, how to motivate your actions – is far more important than external work, because it is this that determines whether what you do becomes the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering.*

*How to live intelligently is not taught in schools, colleges or universities. Because you get paid for doing your job, it appears to be the cause of happiness and you believe it to be so. In reality, no matter how perfectly you do your job, how skilled you are or how many billions you make, since you are doing it out of worldly motivation (and) attachment ... the work you do can never become the cause of happiness but constantly becomes the cause of suffering instead.*

*LAMA ZOPZ RINPOCHE:*

## Thoughts About The Journey by Tony Smibert

Success is one thing, happiness another, so a career artist must achieve balance between the various competing elements of life: art, career, family, friends and so on.

We all want to be happy and so there's the need to look after oneself, not only as an individual but as the primary employee in your own small business. On the assumption that you started out wanting to be an artist – and not just a painter in watercolour – then you will try to find a reasonable balance between the things that generate income and those don't.

I guess that most of us start out fascinated by watercolour itself. We know that we'll have to learn the skills involved and

may think that that's all we'll have to learn. But we soon find out that watercolour is not as easy as it looked when we saw it demonstrated and can be pretty confronting. From the beginning we find that our skills are affected by things that have to do with our mental state - with hesitation for example or assumptions about the medium we've got to overcome, or whatever. Watercolour SHOULD be easy, but it isn't. And so you work hard to learn the many drills and disciplines required for mixing and applying wash until at last you start to understand the way that watercolour actually works.

Around about then you also develop a better feeling for the ways that you can coax it to stay and settle where you

want it to. You think you've learned a physical skill yet also sense a change in your attitude to painting. You may feel even more excited and more confident and notice that even mixing paint has become a time for mental preparation – in the same way that an oriental ink painter sees the grinding of ink as a kind of meditation to calm the spirit before painting.

A painter in the 'western' tradition may be less likely to recognise these changes as development of an 'inner' art that is fully as important as any increase of technical skill. Technical achievement tends to the target we shoot for, thus missing the real purpose for involvement, which probably started out as happiness.

Can painting be a path to happiness? Well yes, because it CAN make us happy while we are doing it. And 'materialistic painting' may lead us towards a common type of unhappiness, brought about by turning something we enjoyed once into a mere tool for to making money.

There IS an inner-art to watercolour. It starts with the mind-body co-ordination so critical to achieving a working relationship with your medium - so that you and it become one and you can paint without having to plan every step - free to act on impulse and with the medium responding to your call

There may also be a greater sense of fulfilment, so that painting is not just about pictures but also about feeling somehow more evolved as a human being. I'm not alluding to any religious notion, but simply noting that art has always been about more than the art objects we might create. It has to do with feeling great, and with a better sense of who we are and why. A landscape painter may come to feel more connected to nature – not only because of painting 'landscapes' but also because doing so helps them to engage with the natural world and to see and experience the colours and textures and shapes of the world more keenly. Anyone who has spent a day painting skies will know how, driving home afterwards, you see the sunset more intensely than you would have if the day had been spent reading! And that's only part of it.

Being a painter is much more than being an observer. It's like swimming because you experience the planet in a way that requires you to think differently. It's a total immersion experience when you plunge in, and even paddling is exciting. To work with your medium you have to learn new skills and these require and develop new types of mental and physical co-ordination. The further you adventure from 'the shore', the more you depend upon your inner resources, but yet you always return invigorated and refreshed.

The Japanese have a word, *misogi*, that uniquely describes this process. It means purification – washing your mind within an activity, much as you might wash your body in water, and then emerging renewed by the experience.

Finally there is a very practical side to the thoughts of the Lama: when we are attached to the 'worldly success' of our art – the attachment to winning prizes or selling well are examples – then we start to lose sight of its potential to bring special qualities to life that are not so easy to measure. Painters tend to dream of hitting the big-time (or even the small-time) someday. We want to feel that our work is progressing, that we are fulfilling ourselves and bringing joy into the lives of those we care about. We want our work to be appreciated and many dream of a viable professional career. Some succeed at it, but the dreaming can also become the cause of unhappiness as we dream of more and more success.

Yet if we hold onto the simple pleasure of painting for its own sake – even though it may also be your source of

income - and keep that uppermost in our mind then the joy may be there in your work to see and, not so strangely, lead to increased sales. But even if sales don't go up, your own appreciation of each moment will and so will the chances of making each painting a great success – for nothing is more likely to mess up a painting than the fear of failure that comes from attachment to succeeding (that 'I might mess it up' feeling causing you to freeze or fumble something at a critical moment).

So where does all this 'philosophy' lead? One of the most important practical things to do is to get the balance right between family, career and art. There will always be things that we need do for those we love along with other things that we do to earn a living but there should also be things that we are prepared to do just for ourselves.

I didn't start painting with ideas of a career. I wanted to paint for me. I was fascinated by watercolor and worked hard at it because I loved it. But then of course I made the fateful decision to become a 'full-time professional'. From then on my life balance was all tied up in watercolor. I still painted for the joy of it BUT I now had to keep my family by painting. It couldn't be a hobby anymore. Things had changed and so I had to find some kind of balance.

The way I see it now, while I'm still painting for me rather than "the market", I also know that I'll have to sell some of what I paint. So I try to think like an artist when painting, but like a business-person when I select which ones to put in frames. And I still paint lots of pictures for ME alone – all sorts of experiments that no-one else may ever see or appreciate but bring me fulfillment and the feeling that I'm moving forward. Most painters quickly find out that painting to please people or to win public approval is not a path worth traveling, so I always focused on the things that I want to paint and in the way that I want to paint them. Yet I'm also aware that many of the greatest names from art history were very business-like. It's how they survived and were able to keep painting (and how we got to know about them). And so in my own small way I try to keep a personal balance.

A Chinese painter of the 11th Century wrote of his father:

*"On a day that he was to paint, he would seat himself at a bright window with fine paints before him. He would mix them as if preparing to welcome an honoured guest. Then, when inspiration seized him, he painted with the focus of a man guarding against a strong enemy. Yet if he were interrupted he would lay down his brushes and welcome the visitor with equanimity"*.

It's a summary of one man's inner-balance as a water-colourist but more than that, is also a model for practise that any artist in almost any field of endeavour might admire today.

**POST SCRIPT:** So how does this relate to Aikido? Well, obviously Aikido is about living intelligently: we strive to be fit, to find harmony with other people, with nature and in everything we do. Our teachers and training partners give us their energies and experiences, we get to work at polishing our physical forms in company with terrific people, and come away home feeling fit and invigorated. Then as time passes, through training we come to find that there is a deep inner-art to Aikido and that all that joyful training is only a means to a greater end. Aikido ends up as much a part of everyday life as, well, everyday life is! Osensei's reference to term *takemusu* (as in *takemusu aiki*) alludes to a creative process within training (and/or painting?) and of being in creative harmony. It's one of the goals of Aikido. And as painter, I'm excited by that!

*Editor's note: Many people know that our Australian Shihan are often invited to teach seminars overseas. In the last 12 months they have played their part in keeping Sugano Shihan's legacy alive by teaching around Australia, in Europe, the United States, South East Asia and Japan. In June this year, Tony Smibert Shihan was special guest at Gentile Pennewaert Sensei's Sugano Shihan Commemorative Summer Camp at Newport Beach in California. As many of our readers know, Gentile Pennewaert Sensei is the person behind the wonderful DVD's of Sugano Shihan's Sword System. So when Shin Do Kan offered an article for our Australian Newsletter As many people know, our Australian Shihans are often invited to teach seminars overseas. We asked them to cover not only the summer camp but also the videos.*

## Sugano Shihan Commemorative Summer Camp Newport Beach, California, June 2013.

A special report from Shin Do Kan Dojo

Nestled in the Seaside Mountains of Santa Barbara, Newport Beach Aikikai Shin Do Kan Dojo celebrated their third annual Sugano Shihan Commemorative Summer Camp. Years before Sugano Shihan's passing, Sensei Gentil Pennewaert (6th Dan and Otomo to Sugano Shihan from Belgium) had arranged an outdoor seminar in the mountains. They had discussed about having an outdoor summer camp at this beautiful location where the ocean and the mountains had merged. Although Sugano Shihan has passed, we continue to commemorate his legacy every year.

This year, Tony Smibert Sensei (7th Dan Shihan) from Australia was invited as the special guest sensei. At the Summer Camp, Sensei Pennewaert described Smibert Sensei as the "Sempai of all of us here". A special plaque with Sensei Smibert's name now sits next to Sugano Shihan's plaque on the Shin Do Kan dojo wall. We are very fortunate to have Smibert Sensei as our special guest as he was among the first group of students to follow Sugano Shihan when he first arrived in Australia in 1965. Our students witnessed a boyish energy that was still very much excited about aikido. The high paced class generated a lot of energy as students were learning about being shadows and mirror images from their partners. Smibert Sensei recounted stories of having innocently followed Sensei as a young lad and learning through his experiences was fascinating. Students got a glimpse of what it was like to be close to Sugano Shihan. The highlight of the seminar was when Smibert Sensei had drawn the image of Sugano Shihan up in the mountains with his silhouette on the mountainside. We could all imagine Sugano Shihan's shadow on the cliff as he chanted the sounds of Kotedama. Vibrations of specific sounds were practiced as students were able to connect with their uke in a very special sense. As many of the students tried to catch their breaths, it was as if they entered another dimension of aikido. Pennewaert Sensei had personally experienced Kotedama practice with Sugano Shihan and recalls how special it was for the few who were lucky to learn from Sugano Shihan.

As the early morning dew had just set in, students collected in the large yurt with their pillows and knees folded. The peaceful sunrise was warming the tents and cabins nearby and the birds were singing their morning song. Led by Pennewaert Sensei, mediation was an integral part of preparing ourselves for the day's events. Sitting in stillness and allowing the images to pass in our minds, we were clearing our thoughts for the intense practice ahead.

Weapons class with Pennewaert Sensei out in the middle of the open field began with a good warm up with the Bokken. As the students gathered around the not so smooth surface, they learned to be more aware and to bend their knees in their practice. Pennewaert Sensei reminds his students that in the real world, you have to be able to respond in all surroundings. You cannot be fixed in your practice but rather "Blend" with your environment. Sugano Shihan enjoyed being close to nature and the idea of an outdoor weapons practice was ideal.

A long-time follower of Sugano Shihan. Marie Petery Sensei, 6th dan was also invited to teach the afternoon class. Petery Sensei gained the respect of the students quickly as she demonstrated her strong understanding of basics. Both children and adults were able to grasp her clear explanation and found her class very enjoyable with the use of bokken and jo as examples. We are very pleased to have Petery Sensei join us as she will be remembered as the first Australian female sensei to teach at the Sugano Shihan's summer camp.

In the evening after an intense grading of Dan testing for shodan and sandans, we all enjoyed an appetizing buffet by the fireside and practice yurt. All the students were quite satiated from the day's events and it was time to share with the supportive families and friends about what we had all learned this year.



*Sugano Shihan Commemorative Summer Camp, Newport Beach California, June 2013.*



As the Sugano Shihan summer camp comes to an end, we reflect back to the events and realize that we have all gathered together for the purpose of reaching a higher level of understanding and growth. We must continue to strive towards the mountaintop. As Smibert Sensei describes, “at first, we are naïve and young and we start at the bottom, working hard to clear the brushes and climb the mountain. As we sustain the bruises and broken egos, we are passing with experience through the shrubs. And finally, we reach a level where the view is much better and everything becomes clearer. We should keep in mind that things will get clearer but we must first pass through the levels to reach the top”.

#### THE SUGANO SWORD SYSTEM DVD'S

As O'Sensei did not leave a system of weapons practice, Sugano Shihan set out to develop and organize a systematic approach to swordsmanship through bokken training. These techniques, now often referred to as the Sugano Sword System were demonstrated by him and professionally filmed at the Shin Do Kan dojo over a number of years by Pennewaert Sensei.

It is so important that we keep in mind that these techniques help us in understanding the movements of aikido as a whole. Our own teacher, Pennewaert Sensei often reiterates that “this is not fencing or trying to hit the bokken.” Students who practice these lessons should train regularly with a partner to develop the essential awareness of timing, distance, and direction. He further describes it this way, “Sugano Shihan wanted to find a way to explain Aikido. By creating the weapons system, he was able to make aikido come alive and use weapon as analogies. You really need to understand the concept and why you are doing aikido, not just memorizing the pattern and repeating the movements. Through Sugano Sensei's weapons system, we learn that the weapons are merely an extension of our body.” For his own part, Pennewaert Sensei wants the DVD's to help spread the valuable gift that Sugano Shihan left behind so he certainly encourages students to learn from this system to further their understanding.

The Sugano Sword System currently has two volumes and has many valuable lessons on how to move with the weapon and respond to your partner. A third volume which is still under editing and production will be introduced soon. Pennewaert Sensei notes that, “Sugano Shihan wanted us to fully understand system 1 and 2 first before the third volume is unveiled. The third dvd is for advanced students who fully understand the first pattern (Ichi no ken). It was Sugano Shihan's hope for us to evolve with this system and not to stay fixed. The goal now is to promote the basics of the Sugano Sword System. It is through practice that we begin to understand. It is the process, the journey of life that is the goal”.



*TTC NOTE: Here in Australia we have benefitted from a generous offer by Pennewaert Sensei to offer the DVD's through Aikikai Australia at an Australia only price. Sugano Sensei's Foundation has consequently given copies to the 6th dans and Area Representatives in every state. In doing this, the Trustees are mindful that Sensei did not want his Aikido to be fixed, so that he was sometimes very reserved about allowing his teaching to be formalized on film. But in the case of these DVD's he worked closely with Pennewaert Sensei and film-makers to leave a clear record of his understanding at that time. Then, as the years passed he continued to develop and teach further levels of training. We see these films as a very important and available reference. Pennewaert Sensei passed on to Smibert Shihan some years back that Sugano Sensei had told him that the DVD's were NOT designed to be 'the teacher' but simply, to complement dojo study.) We're very glad to have them.*

*Kokyunage  
with  
Sugano Sensei  
in Melbourne  
January, 2006.*



# *Aikido in Australia*

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 1

