

Aikido in Australia

Aiki Kai Australia National Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 5



Celebrating 50 years of Aiki Kai Australia

1965 - 2015

*and the legacy of Seiichi Sugano Shihan's
lifetime of teaching Aikido*

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, 6th 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. email: gamorris007@hotmail.com
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, 5th Dan..
Tel: 03 9802 7211 M: 0418 381 674 email: linda.godfrey@iinet.net.au

WA: Hugh Derham, 6th Dan, PO Box 1274 East Victoria Park WA 6981.
Tel: 08 9367 6407 mobile: 0421 342 857

General Editor : John Litchen.

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

Registrar: Kathy McCarthy.

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

Webmaster: John Rockstrom. phone: H 03 9787 2926,
mobile 0417 135 235.

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. **Austin James.** **NT:** 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, Peter Morgenroth. Michael de Young. **WA:** Hugh Derham.

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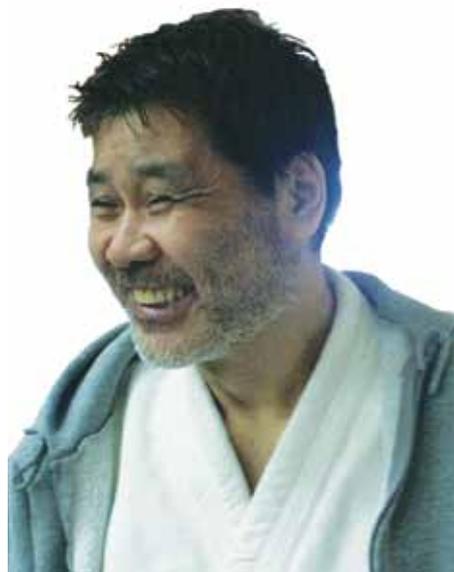
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NEW EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Aiki Kai Australia has had an equal opportunity policy drawn up. The policy contains procedures to be followed should, for example, any person feel that they have been victimised or sexually harassed. This policy is posted on the website. Should anyone experience or have a matter of concern, they should contact Andrew Dziedzic to find out the appropriate officer to speak to. All enquiries will be handled with the strictest confidence and should discussion be needed Andrew will phone back at Aiki Kai Australia's expense.



Promotions at Winter School 2015

Shodan:

Eri Asakawa Atkinson (NSW)

Peter Formby (NSW)

Linda Fox (Vic)

Sean Lee (NSW)

Kevin Moroney (Qld)

Nidan:

Paul Parrish (NSW)

Sandan:

Greg Tonowicz (NSW)

George Osvald (NSW)

Yondan:

Bill Birnbauer (Vic)

Unfortunately over the last 6 months or so since the previous newletter a couple of well loved senior Instructors for Aiki Kai Australia have sadly passed away: Peter Henley Sensei last May and this very month Matthew Lo Sensei. *See Pages 19 and 22...*

Photos of Matthew Lo by Margaret Carter. pages 19, 20

Front cover, Sugano Sensei, Gold Coast 1999 by J Litchen.

Back cover winter school 2015 photos by Youz Iqbal

*Other photos throughout: John Litchen and Margaret Carter
Smibert Shihan photo page 12: courtesy of Helene Rasse*

...a couple of issues back we published a story by Martin Bratzel, 5th Dan and Area Representative for Tasmania about his journey from Hombu Dojo in Japan to living and establishing a dojo in Tasmania. We continue this story on the following pages...



From Hombu to Tassie - The story of Tenchi Dojo
Text and photos by Martin Bratzel, 5th Dan

Part Two – This land now known as Tenchi Farm

Walking onto this land now known as Tenchi Farm was very similar in many ways to falling in love with Aikido. There was a sense of awe and wonder, of belonging, of homecoming and of recognition, yes, a vibrating through my being in a very physical experience as I was trying to take in the beauty of the place while trembling with excitement. I looked at open grasslands surrounded by forests and mountains with views of the valley and a big sky, a mountain pony and a mule curiously looking on and I felt an immediate connection.

After having lived on the island for years, a forgotten memory appeared: as a 13 year old schoolboy in an English class I came across the story of an early explorer. It read: A Small Island somewhere in the Southern Seas... That part of the sentence stirred my emotions and gave me a rush of energy, of warmth and of yearning before it faded away. I remembered it decades later and realized that this is where I was: on a magic island of a long forgotten dream.

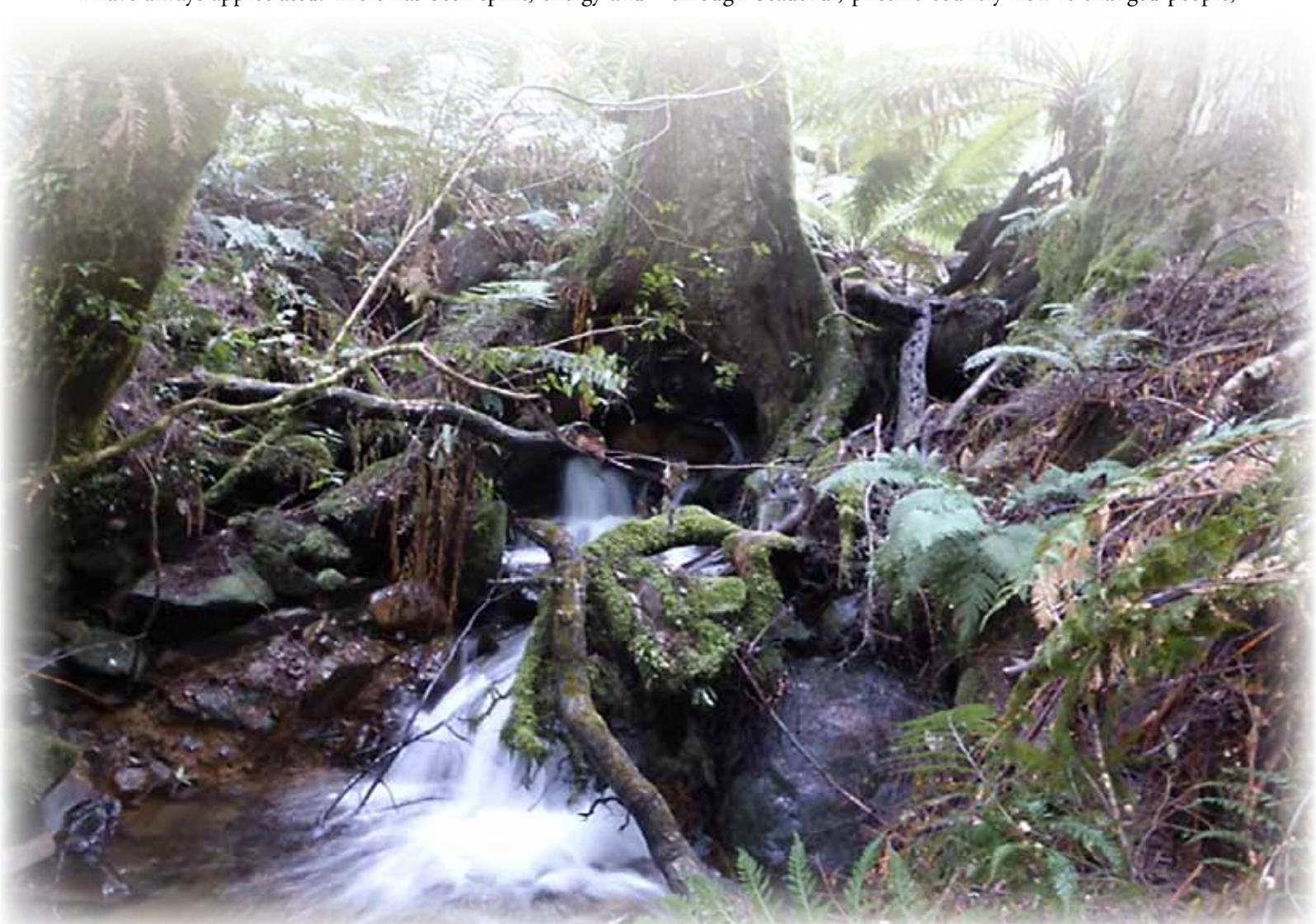
I loved the Aikido in Australia, sharing my hometown with Tony Smibert and training with him, with Andrew Ross and John Karas on a consistent basis has been a privilege that I have always appreciated. There has been spirit, energy and

solidity and anyone who knows those dudes knows what I am talking about. And I fitted right in there.

However having come with the vague idea of building a Dojo and teaching Aikido in Australia like many of my expatriate training partners at the Hombu Dojo I felt my enthusiasm received a severe blow when I realized there was no room for professional Aikido in Aiki Kai Australia. Together with the turbulences and responsibilities of fatherhood and a new family instead of being in a centred space with a clear direction life felt like a cosmic tumble dryer and the homecoming to the blessed country had a fair dose of yin yang attached to it.

It was a time of high unemployment and I was lucky to land a job as a guide in the newly built luxury huts on the overland trek of the Cradle Mt. National Park. The way I felt about coming to my land was how I felt about coming to the island and this feeling was magnified on entering this park in the heart of the heart shaped island.

While I spent 6 days at a time away from my family and Aikido practice, I loved that work. I observed walking through beautiful, pristine country how it changed people,



Celebrating 50 years of Aikido in Australia

*Tenchi Dojo under construction
Group photo at the end of the first training session.*

*Martin : kokyunage with Jo
Funegogi during the first training session at
the new dojo.*

*Weapons training in the new dojo.
Martin standing at the base of that BIG
tree with Ruth Peyser 6th dan from New York.*



just like training did, and how it was feeding my soul and those of my clients. While I had always loved the outdoors at the end of that period I became aware of a conscious connection with Nature and a call by Spirit. When I returned from a 6 day trek onto my own land its beauty had not diminished. Quite the contrary I could see a glow around the place and the magic seemed very tangible. The forest around the grandfather and grandmother trees was certainly a big part of it. Old gum tree giants from a time long before European arrival standing in a setting of mature musk understory next to a community of the tallest man ferns imaginable; a place easy to dream and to listen to the timeless whispering of the elements and of other worlds. I have always loved to bring people to this inviting fairyland of forest. It is a place that feels to many like a sacred garden, a microcosm of a beautiful forested island and benevolent planet, a temple of Nature in which we sometimes gather to acknowledge the passing of a friend or loved one. We did a kotodama chanting there after Sugano Sensei left his body and were moved by the presence of his Spirit.

At the time I arrived in Tasmania the wood chip production was in full swing. It had become clear Tassie's Native Forests could be very profitably turned into cardboard boxes. There was a long struggle to minimise logging in the state, including a period of conflict around the beautiful forests of the Great Western Tiers, just above our farm, which became a centre for the gathering of hundreds of concerned people from around Tasmania, including many from Aikido.

Soon after, the owner of the forest next to us told us to remove our water pipe because he was going to develop the block. Developing was the word for clear felling and for putting in plantations. We got the shock of our lives when we realized the grandparent trees and the pristine forest around them was on his side of the unmarked forest boundary. The big old trees would be regarded as problem trees and dynamited, the ancient fern forest, our Garden of Eden, would be bulldozed, put into windrows and burnt to make way for the pulp plantation. It was a shockingly stressful time where the sacred ground of our forest temple faced a prolonged real life and death situation. It showed us, however, how strong our connection, our feelings and love for that forest was.

I had asked my brother at that time for a loan towards building the Dojo, which as it had always been for me, seemed just around the corner. Surveyors, contracts, boundary adjustment, mediation at court, lawyer's fees, and negotiations and eventually the purchase of the forest on our side of the mountain stream based on a generous loan saved the forest to our indescribable relief.

While the Dojo had a big place in our hearts and minds there was never a question of sacrificing the forest for it because there was no separation between the Spirit of the dojo and the Spirit of the forest, between Aikido and Nature, the Universe and the Human Spirit, the Ancestor and Future Generations - it is one, it is all one.

Now, as I look out at the finished dojo in its wonderful setting, and think of the many Aikido students from around the world who have already trained there, I can't help but think that the spirit of Aikido must have been at work here all along.

FROM THE SUGANO FOUNDATION:

FOCUS ON WOMEN IN AIKIDO: Those who attended the international Women in Aikido Forum at Summer School (and reported in this issue) will be pleased to hear that the Sugano Foundation's proposal to fund this as a book was picked up by Linda Godfrey Sensei and the other presenters – all senior female instructors from around the world – so that we now hope to make the finished publication available early next year.

FOCUS ON YOUTH: During the 50th Anniversary School the Sugano Foundation proposed a very special focus for the Summer School of 2017 or 18. And at time of writing, our National Area Representative, Dziejcz Sensei, is in Japan for meetings with Doshu, Waka Sensei and Hombu International Department about it. The proposal is a unique "Next Generation" school with Waka Sensei, Mitsuteru Ueshiba, as Guest of Honour. As well as the excitement and training of any Summer School this will also focus on building connections between younger trainees in Australia, Japan and any other nations who may wish to participate. It won't be a big event, but it will have a special focus, including financial assistance for a small group of younger trainees (ages 15 – 40) to go to Japan some months before, in order to attend the IAF Seminar and train at Hombu, followed by a similar group of younger Japanese coming out to Summer School in Melbourne. It's not confirmed yet, and we'll publish more on the website as news becomes available.

FOCUS ON OLDER TRAINEES: Our special guest at the upcoming Tasmanian Summer School, Kubota Shihan (8th dan), is not only in his mid-70's, but also renowned for his energy and precision. Both he and his teacher, Tada Sensei (9th dan and now in his mid-80's) exemplify the model of healthy training into later life. Kubota Sensei brings with him an opportunity for our very large number of older trainees to learn something of Tada Sensei's approach to kokyu and breath training as a key to enjoying Aikido long term. We're planning to ask Kubota Sensei to offer extra sessions in the smaller dojo focussed exclusively on ways to train into older age.

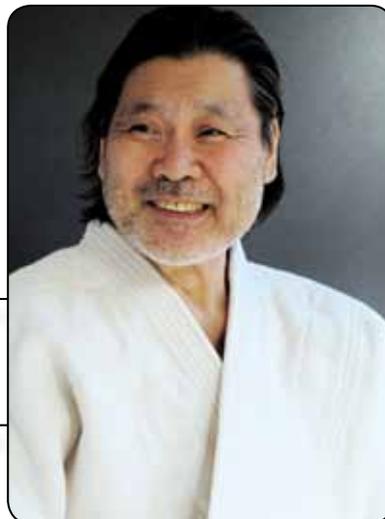
John Rockstrom for the TTC

Editor's note: The article by Sensei below was first published in Aikido Australia Autumn 1991, and then subsequently reprinted the issue of Spring/Summer 1996.

It seems timely that now 50 years since Sensei first came to Australia we should publish it again.

Careful study of Sensei's words will reveal profound insights into Irimi-nage.

Some Words to Aikido Students by Seiichi Sugano Shihan



It is most enjoyable for me to come back to Australia regularly to teach Aikido and to see you all again.

Aikido is just like a person's life: your true nature does not change, however, your understanding of matter and physical motion keeps evolving. I can see this within myself, and within some of you.

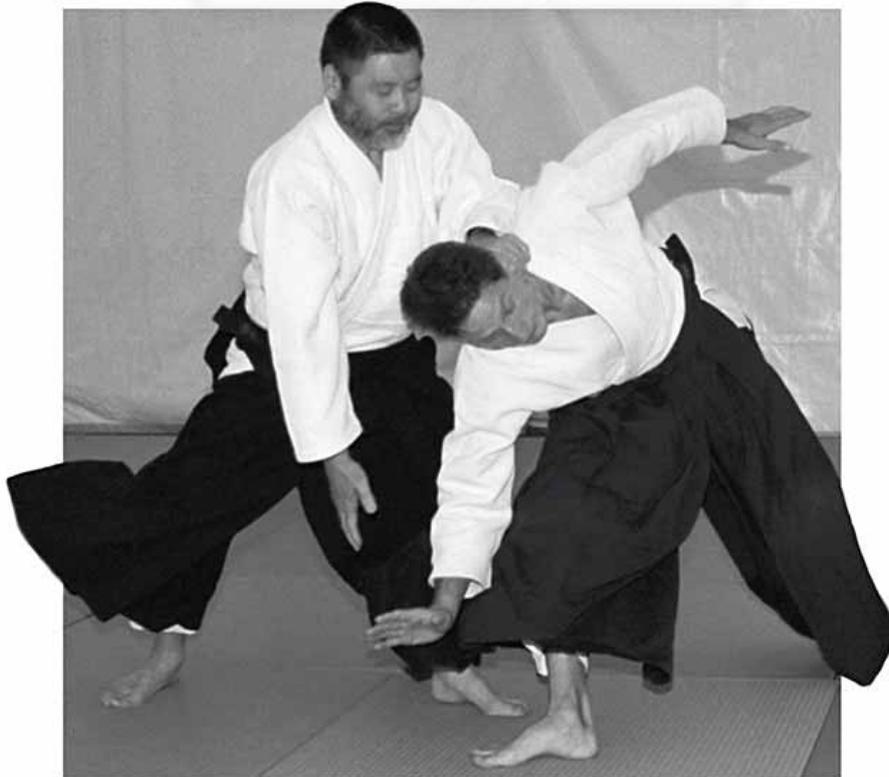
Most of the senior students have now been training nearly twenty years or more. I admire you for that. Your courage and patience gives me new inspiration to continue to pursue what Aikido means to me and to understand what Aikido means to you.

To the many younger and new students of Aikido, you need to have attentiveness and patience in your training, because much of the teaching is non-verbal. You must watch carefully when your teacher shows you the technique and gives you a short explanation at the same time. This is the method of Aikido training.

You need to be patient then slowly your understanding of Aikido and yourself develops. Remember that this development begins on the first day of your training: and it never ends.



Notes on Irimi-nage ... 5 variations.



Notes on Irimi-nage (5 variations).

Description 1:

As the shomen uchi attack comes you must do three things at once.

Extend your arm, step behind your partner, and hold the back of your partner's neck.

Next, take your partner's whole body downward and as he recovers his position, throw him back with your arm and your body in coordination.



Description 2:

From a right shomen uchi attack, hit your partner's face with your right hand. As your partner responds step in beside him to hit his rib with your left hand. Next hold the back of his neck with your left hand and take his body downward. At the same time, if necessary, your right hand is ready to hit his face. If necessary your left hand grabs hold of his collar and as he recovers his position throw him back with your arm and your body in coordination.



The same Irimi-nage seen from left and right sides. Note the preparation for atemi becomes an open hand strike.



Description 3:

As the shomen uchi attack comes, start as description 1, Grab hold of your partner's collar and push him forward until your arm is fully extended then immediately pull back and throw with your arm and body in coordination.

Description 4:

Irimi-nage is just like making an echo. You make the sound. The echo comes back. You initiate the movement and as your partner responds you control him to execute irimi-nage.

Description 5:

Irimi-nage is an exercise to develop the force of gravity within yourself. Don't reject the attack; use gravity's power to draw your partner in. This is centripetal (inward pulling) force, then throw your partner with the opposite power, centrifugal (outward propelling) force.



Three different approaches to Irimi-nage. Sugano Shiban at Summer School in Melbourne 2008 (above and left), and right, at Winter school 2007, Gold Coast.

photos by John Litchen.

Women in Aikido Forum **by Ruth Treyde Sensei and Linda Godfrey Sensei**

Women in Aikido Forum at Summer School 2015 – Chaired by Linda Godfrey (go dan), Area Rep Victoria

Australian Participants: Felicia Birman (roku dan), Marie Petery (roku dan), Ruth Treyde (go dan)

Overseas Participants: Ruth Peyser (roku dan), Michelle Feilan (roku dan), Mallory Graham (roku dan) and Chris Wong (go dan)

At the 50th Anniversary School we held a forum – ‘The Journey of Women in Aikido’ -at which many senior instructors from around the globe shared and discussed ways we can all ensure that Aikido is open, equal, positive and welcoming to both sexes. Prior to the forum all participants were given a suggested set of areas to consider to try and ensure a consistency of discussion and more importantly to have a positive constructive dialogue. The forum was well attended, including many senior male students along with Tony Smibert Shihan.

Women comprise 50% of the general population, yet in aikido in Australia women overall comprise 20% of our student population.

Aim of the forum was to: -

- Demonstrate the place of senior women in aikido.
- Provide an opportunity for senior women from around the world to discuss and share their personal aikido experiences from a woman’s perspective.
- Highlight the challenges that women have experienced and overcome in their journey.

Common to the discussion was the joy of training. There was a fascination with the movement, with its softness, strength and grace. And it was non competitive. Training also provided a sense of family and opportunity to socialise. All of the senior women emphasised the significant role that male instructors had played in their aikido development. The participants emphasised how much they had enjoyed the support and friendship of the women in the aikido community whenever they could be found.

Issues for women on the mat were wide ranging. These included:

- Inappropriate warm ups such as jumping up and down which can be uncomfortable for women with larger breasts;
- The challenges of training during pregnancy and training when children are young;
- Balancing work and or children and training;
- Having the confidence to speak out on personal issues on the mat. There was recognition of the role member protection officers could play;
- The not so rare occurrence of condescending junior males correcting senior women. This raised the question of would he correct a 6th dan male? Also the common practice of male students stopping a woman from doing a technique. This reinforced the perception of males as authority figures. The most common women’s response was to feel she was a poor student;
- Predatory behaviour by certain males who always seek out junior women to train with. The behaviour was similar to grooming;
- Working with senior males to model and reinforce appropriate behaviours;
- Why and what happens when women cry on the mat? Often it is because she feels threatened or because she has been hit and is shocked. This in turn may help a bully realise what he is doing;
- The sensitivities of dealing with and training with women who are victims of abuse was challenging and recognised the need to respect personal privacy; and
- Recognition that we still live in a sexist society.

The importance of senior women in aikido was also discussed. Having women instructors gave the class and students a balanced aikido perspective and provided an equal opportunity to teach. They were also visible role models for other women. Good examples were: taking the opportunity to showcase women instructors at national events eg having just the senior women take the focus training; and making the opportunity for women to be seen taking ukemi especially in demonstrations. Also discussed was the value of an occasional women only class to discuss issues and to train in a more supportive environment or to have a specific low impact class.

Having conversations in the women’s change rooms provided the perfect opportunity to discuss issues that arose on the mat and to discuss ways to protect, guide and support junior women. This led on to a discussion about mentoring junior women and how to do that effectively.

Unfortunately time ran out for an in depth discussion of women in administrative and policy roles in aikido organisations, and not just as secretary. There was agreement on the need to bring a women's perspective to influence issues facing the organisation.

The forum was the start of the conversation that is now being developed into a book with contributions from some of the senior women in the forum and others around the world who have a connection with Sugano Sensei and Australia. The book is called 'In Conversation with Aikido Women'. This initiative is being led by Linda Godfrey Sensei with editorial assistance from Bill Birnbaurer Sensei whom many people know was a respected journalist for over 30 years with 'The Age' and is now a lecturer at Swinburne Uni. Ruth Peyser Sensei (USA) has kindly agreed to do the book design.

In addition in Victoria we have had a special day of training focused on mentoring students (mixed gender) led by Peter Morgenroth Sensei and a group of junior women dan grades led by Linda Godfrey Sensei. We have commenced instructor training (1st kyu and above) addressing some of the issues arising from the forum, which relate to our national member protection policy. These will be developed further over time.

The conversation regarding women in aikido in Australia has already begun to change as a result of the forum. There is no doubt that there are many men in aikido who are really listening and want guidance on what to do to help this change this gender imbalance. The support for this is at all levels within the organisation, not least of all from Tony Smibert Shihan who suggested running the forum at the 50th Anniversary school, the biggest event in our entire history of the organisation.



Linda Godfrey
Sensei



Ruth Treyde
Sensei

TELL US THEIR STORY...

Our Newsletter is now dispatched around the world, and is a favourite gift when received by the many friends and former students of Aiki Kai Australia overseas. It's the official voice of AKA and aims to deliver, not news exactly, but rather more than that – articles of lasting interest. As someone who often has to contribute articles I'm also very aware of the many other senior people we never hear about; and they certainly never offer to write! We've always had a problem sourcing articles – and particularly from our most senior trainees. This time, in order to get something from me, Andrew Dzedzic contrived an 'interview'. He then did the same with Janiv Shihan – and plans to do so with Botterill Shihan, in future.

So please, if you'd like to see your own senior/s in the Newsletter (and we want them there) please consider interviewing them too. We'd particularly like to have their thoughts on technical or philosophical aspects of Aikido, their memories, or personal histories of training with Sugano Sensei or in any of the far flung regions of Australia. (If experience so far is anything to go on, very few will thrust themselves forward, so it may be up to you.) But that's not all – we would love to publish Aikido articles of lasting interest from people at all levels. We want YOUR experiences too.

Please let our editor, John Litchen, know if you've an idea for an interview or story. He'll be happy to give you the guidelines and make the job a lot easier. You'll find his details in the list of office bearers in this issue, and on the AKA website. Those we never hear about are often the unsung heroes of our organisation. Please help us to hear from them.

Thank you
Tony Smibert.



An Interview with Tony Smibert Shihan
by Andrew Dziedzic Sensei

I recently interviewed Tony Smibert Shihan, one of the three Trustees of Sugano Sensei's Aikido Foundation. I realized that many may be unaware of his long-term role on the Aikido world stage, reflecting Aiki Kai Australia's engagement with the IAF, where he has been made a member of the Senior Council of the IAF (International Aikido Federation). In the next issue I shall be interviewing Hanan Janiv Shihan about his memories of training in the very early days in Sydney, and later I shall also interview Robert Botterill Shihan.

Q. What is the role of the Senior Council?

A. A group appointed by Doshu to have oversight of the IAF, and in theory made up of very senior Japanese masters or people who have given great service to Aikido. So how I got there is unclear! However it was probably because for 20 years I was a Vice-Chairman of the IAF. It's challenging because at the moment I am the only non-Japanese on the Council and my fellow members are all very senior people - so I am a small voice amongst a very distinguished group - which includes Tada Shihan as the Chair, Yamada Sensei, Asai Shihan, Fukakusa Shihan and others. It's quite daunting because The Senior Council has always met in conjunction with the IAF Directing Committee, of which I was a member for so long, so I grew up looking across the table at shihans including Yamaguchi Sensei, Okamura Sensei, Tada Sensei, Arikawa Sensei, Tamura Sensei, Yamada Sensei and of course our own Sugano Shihan. Now many of that generation have passed on and I find myself on their side of the table, wondering how the hell that happened? I see my own function there as providing something of a bridge between the broader international side of the IAF - particularly the Administration, on the one side - and the higher thinking of the senior Japanese shihans, on the other.

Q. What's your perspective on what has occurred since Sensei's death?

A. As a Trustee of the Foundation, and like all the Fellows of the Foundation, my concern is that we keep alive the spirit of Sugano Sensei's approach to Aikido, given that each of us may have varying ideas of what that spirit is. My view is that we are managing to work together very cohesively, and I hope that most people share my view that we are going well, given the great loss of Sensei himself. Most noticeably I think we are also starting to come to an understanding that Aikido is about change and generational renewal - being a life-long path - so the purpose of our organisation is to provide a path along which people can travel both individually and collectively. Aikido itself is reasonably

fixed in people's minds as having certain basic forms, but we all know that Sensei himself said that nothing was fixed, so we happily accept that our Aikido will continually change and evolve - while still remaining Aikido. While Sensei was alive, we were able to witness his development in front of us, and I personally saw him evolve from the 25 year old hot-shot instructor direct from O'Sensei's dojo who came here in 1965, then into someone who could truly be seen as an old Master - it was very impressive. Now that he is gone, I look at my friends and peers and see them developing and hopefully myself developing; so in that sense we are keeping alive an aspect of Aikido that our teacher saw as being of primary importance.

Another great thing is that Sensei's students from around the world have now discovered each other - I think this is most obvious in the working relationship that has grown up between Sensei's students in Australia and Belgium. It's also apparent in the close family relationship we have with the New York Aiki Kai; of course we have also benefited from the generous patronage of Yamada Sensei - reflecting the love and support he gave to Sugano Sensei during his lifetime.

I don't think any of us really feel that Sensei expected this, but it's certainly true that his passing triggered a very strong connection between many of his students world-wide. Here in Australia I think we are continuing to work very cohesively and in the most positive of ways mostly because Sensei's influence and leadership seems to have attracted and/or developed good people - so that, from top to bottom, you find terrific folk individually and collectively focused on training, universally willing to contribute their best efforts for no personal reward and able, as in the case of Victoria, to stage the most incredible events - of which the 50th Anniversary Summer School was the most outstanding example. Our people are amazing: they are not only the instructors and students, they are the very fibre of our organization, which thrives because of their energy and contribution.

Q. What about the future?

A. No one can read the future. But there is a danger that we will think about our own generation rather than about the ones still to come. I didn't realize it back then, but Sugano Sensei must have had the idea that he was building the leaders of the future from the very beginning, just as a gardener might have the idea that certain plants will grow up to be big shade trees and provide a protective ecological structure for the rest of the garden in years to come. So now we have to ask ourselves whether we are doing enough towards the future or simply keeping our own organization running for now. Today there are many young people who we want to be the teachers and leaders of the future; and those people will have to provide technical instruction and inspiration to people who haven't even been born yet. So the big challenge for my own generation, who had so much time with Sensei, who have been training a long time and who carry the responsibility that goes along with that, is right now how to nurture and encourage generational transition on an ongoing basis.

Q. How will that work?

A. I'm not certain, but I have a view that great education consists of three elements, which you might call "The Three i's".

The first of these is *information*. The information you need to prepare you for the steps involved in whatever you are going to study.

Then secondly you need clear *instruction*, giving you step by step guidance. This technical instruction - if it's clear - will not only teach you a skill, but also provide you with guidance on how you can learn further skills for yourself. A good example is being taught ikkyo and then going on to use that experience to help you to learn nikyo, sankyo and so on.

The 3rd "i" stands for *inspiration* - and in this case is something that makes you feel that the art is worthwhile and helps you believe that you will be able to learn it. It's a feeling of empowerment that fuels you towards continuing your study.

When you look at Aikido, the organization provides the basic information; then the instructors are charged with teaching the syllabus, and everybody will more or less look to the most senior people to inspire them. This won't come from them trying to be superior, but it comes from setting a good role model in your own study, training and behaviour; and in the case of Aikido we expect to see the seniors endeavouring continue to mature and evolve just as we all saw it in Sensei himself... just as we saw it with all those masters I mentioned. As Osawa Sensei Senior said to us when he visited in the early 1980's, the secret to growing a quality Aikido organization doesn't lie in advertising, it lies in becoming better people ourselves. So if you look for the 3 "i's" here we start with a very strong organization working hard to keep people well informed, just as is the case with this newsletter that John Litchen works so hard to produce. I think we also provide good instruction at all levels and all around Australia, and we are trying to train and qualify the instructors who are providing that instruction so very well. We are also doing whatever we can to ensure that the most senior instructors, including the 6th dans, each with some part of Sensei's heritage within themselves, are assisted to collectively provide an inspirational resource for everybody.

Q. What's your personal role?

A. I guess my main responsibility is to keep training and studying myself, while doing whatever I can to assist the Foundation and Aiki Kai Australia to play a positive part in world Aikido and also to ensure that the perspective that Sensei left us remains a significant part of world Aikido thinking. (It may be a surprise to many in Australia to hear that Sensei was not only widely regarded as a great teacher but also as a global thinker within the key leaders of the IAF.) When I am teaching I try to always remember that I am still Sugano Sensei's student. When I walk out onto the mat I always start with that in mind, but then once I am out there, I expect to tap into my own resources as deeply as possible. And I hope that's what Sensei would have expected. So every moment at aikido is about discovery and realisation, along with protection and re-creation of the forms in which we all train.

Q. Can you give me an example?

A. The best example may well be Sugano Sensei's sword system, which was unique to him and evolved out of his personal study with O Sensei and his other teachers in early life, combined with his own life-long study and influenced by his experiences in western fencing. In the last part of his life he gave us his system as a teaching method.

Those who encountered him at the end of his life might imagine this was something born completely formed, but for those who were with him for a lifetime realize that this came to him after a long period of development. We were studying with him during decade after decade of it and so we have a wonderful opportunity to bring together both perspectives. Firstly the spirit of the sword, which the oldest group learned in hand to hand training with Sugano Sensei over a long time; and the second, the close detailed technical instruction which Sensei focussed on giving to a younger generation in the last 10 or so years of his life, along with his latest thinking. Together they make up a total package – so that now it's exciting to see the generations working together exploring this - I think that's happening.

If we look at the sword system itself, we can see that certain basic forms that should all be teaching pretty much the same way. Sensei clarified those patterns on many occasions as a teaching system. But at the highest level of the system, I am quite certain that Sensei would have expected us to evolve and develop independently, not at all so as to separate from each other, but because individuals will always become more themselves, self-realise and come to see things differently, just as we do in other areas of Aikido. Trying to keep a handle on this might become a problem if we forget the nature of Aikido and the model of development and study demonstrated by Sensei himself. Do I think that problem will develop? No, I don't.

Look at what happened after O Sensei's death: his wonderful inspiration led to a proliferation of thinking - and I hope that is what will happen with us, while we retain Sensei's core system which anyone can study and which any instructor can teach. Higher understanding doesn't come through sudden flashes of inspiration, but through lots of hard work with the basics. However Sensei's sword system isn't something that anyone can take away and modify in any way you like: it contains Sugano Sensei's own teaching approach and is a structure for systematic communication of a way to "experience". It's the experience gained *through* training that counts, so the evolution of understanding will only come through that ongoing effort. The sword system, just like the basic waza of Aikido's unarmed technique is the structure for that study.

Q. How do you see the role of the Foundation developing?

A. The last 5 years have been very important. We have achieved a lot and there's a lot more we need to achieve. Most importantly the Foundation has continued to facilitate the formal authority that Sensei provided. We haven't abused that in any way. We have been trying to support and protect Aiki Kai Australia and to do the same for Sensei's heritage in any way we can. We are in the process of looking at an internal review: considering what our plans were when we started, what we have achieved and what we haven't yet achieved.

On the achievement side, we have assisted with the travel and teaching by so many of our seniors across the country; we have published the Remembering Sensei book, and the Remembering Sensei film documentary is now in the last stages of getting ready - we are looking for a suitable public launch platform; we have used Foundation funds to bring people to Australia and also assisted the 50th anniversary both financially and in all sorts of other ways.

We have also assisted overseas where we have been asked to help keep alive Sugano Sensei's heritage and teaching; and the Foundation has underwritten a number of Aiki Kai Australia events. We have also managed to build up the Foundation's reserves, out of which we have provided some student bursaries and we are now working with Hombu towards bringing Waka Sensei to Australia for a special Summer School, in connection with a group of young people going to Japan sponsored by the Foundation, thus building relationships that will be important for the next generation. We also have other books in the planning. I guess the biggest problem the Foundation has is that the people involved in it are already loaded down with other Aikido and Aiki Kai Australia responsibilities. And of course, they also have private lives to lead as well, so we sometimes lack the human resource to do all the things we'd like to do.



Q. You are probably sick of answering questions along these broad lines, so how about I ask a technical question about Aikido? The technique we train in most of all and which it often seemed Sugano Sensei loved to start hard training sessions with: irimi nage. What do you consider are the main points?

A. Like most techniques, I think the most important thing is the way you face your partner at the beginning, so that if your kokoro or heart or spirit feeling is strong, you will immediately sense them about to attack you or, they will immediately sense that they have to attack you because of your movement; either way the technique most commonly begins because of that connection.

Q. Do you think that is why Sugano Sensei was so powerful, since whenever you faced him, you felt drawn into the attack?

A. Connection was definitely part of the training with Sugano Sensei: close studentship was actually an integral part of any study with him, and part of this was to almost instantly respond.

That being the case, we were quite safe even when there was speed and power involved, and he was doing the technique at the highest level.

I always think of Sensei in terms of waves. If you can ride waves in a way that's based on a sense of connection with the ocean, then I guess you can ride the really big waves, the sort we see people riding on TV – which is what Sensei's technique could feel like. It was powerful, and you felt that





universal forces were involved. So with irimi nage, there is often a sense of inevitability so that the moment you connect with the other person, the movement instantly begins.

That is the thing which lots of people miss, when movement is initiated by the nage. Uke's shomen is not initiated by choice, but initiated by nage moving to ura and the rising of nage's hand to uke's face - but whatever it is, both uke's attack and the technique are inevitable. O Sensei's comment that, "*When my enemy attacks me, I am already standing behind him*" can certainly be explained this way. Once the technique starts, it can be varied in lots of ways, but the entering principle is the critical element.

Looking back, Sugano Sensei had lots of ways of teaching it to us, so that there was nothing particularly fixed about the way you had to do irimi nage where he was concerned. Maybe the final point is that, because we all have different perspectives on technical elements, as students we have to follow whatever the teacher is doing in the class, and in this way the connection is maintained between teacher and student, and it is in this way also that the connection is retained between all those training together in the class. This is an example of how techniques are only the means to an end, not an end in themselves.

Q: Some years ago Sugano Sensei wrote a terrific article about types of irimi nage for this Newsletter. Do you have any further thoughts?

A: It was a fantastic article and we reprinted it a few years later – and have done so again for this issue. It was and still is a great example of Sensei's capacity to encapsulate very big ideas within very few words. Not something I can do at all. In fact, probably the opposite!

Anyway, it seems to me that recognising three main possibilities for timing is a really important part of the study of irimi nage.

The first of these occurs when nage's movement is *in response* to uke's attack. So that when uke endeavours to strike, you have to move fast and respond instantly. That sort of thing...

The second, and better principle, is when as nage you make a feint or some move that elicits shomen uchi from the attacker. This is like 'the path of an echo' because uke's energy comes back just like an echo of your own energy.

The third is when nage enters well before uke has struck, as mentioned earlier – which was what I think we experienced when Sugano Sensei himself was doing irimi nage in continuous jiyu waza, where it reflected complete control of the moment and seemed at its most harmonious.

Knowing these three main types of timing is really important for instructors and also explains why training in the ai hanmi katate tori irimi nage is so valuable for beginners – because it makes use of the second timing, where nage initiates by offering the wrist; so that when the attacker seizes it they are already following nage and nage is leading.

Ironically, we often show the "*wait until the attacker tries to hit you*" version to people on their first night at Aikido – with the timing of waiting until the attack has begun – which is actually a poor lesson in Aikido principle.

But I most remember Sensei explaining that we had to bring up our hands, seize the neck and enter *at the one time*. These remain the three most important practical elements to maintain. Even if your timing is great, they are critical!

Q: Thank you very much for the interview!

A: Not at all – thank you.

A Common Thread by Andrew Dziejczak Sensei



When I decided to go to Maredsous for the Global Inner Aikido School (or the GIAS), it was with a sense of great anticipation and excitement. I had heard so much about it from various Australians who had attended, for one thing. Our three Trustees, Tony Smibert, Robert Botterill and Hanan Janiv, had all been featured teachers at this annual five day school held in September each year, in the Belgian country-side about an hour and a half's drive south-east of Brussels. Other Australian teachers had also attended, some frequently. This time Tony Smibert was going to be the main teacher, along with Louis van Thieghem, well known to us in Australia. So it was also an opportunity to further my own studies, and to see whether and if so the method of teaching and training under the local instructors differed from what I had experienced in Australia. This was also a great opportunity to renew my friendship with the various Belgians who had visited Australia and also to get to meet other long-term students and teachers who had studied under Sugano Sensei in Belgium.

The Abbey at which the event is held is not only both an active Benedictine Abbey with about 30 monks, but also includes an exclusive private school. It also has a beer brewery and cheese and sausage factory making its own brand of famous produce. In summer, it attracts literally hundreds of visitors at a time to its grounds, who drink the beer, eat the sausage, or perhaps go the ritzy restaurant, as well as inspecting the impressive cathedral size church.

Sugano Sensei had set up this school to be truly international, partly as a bridge between the Flemish and French Aikido organizations in Belgium. However the original initiative had come from 3 Belgian students devoted to Sugano Sensei: Michaël Ameye, Michaël Moyses and Christophe Depaus, who had asked for an event where they could intensively and carefully study the inner aspects of Sugano Sensei's sword system, also with daily meditation.

The School was meant to provide opportunities to explore fellowship as well as close study. Both these "Michaël's" as well as Christophe have attended our Summer Schools in Australia - in fact the "two Michaël's" gave an impressive sword demonstration at the Embu held at the end of our 50th Anniversary School.

At the Global Inner Aikido School, Sensei had systematised his method of teaching into a syllabus, and had even introduced the first stage of specific teacher qualifications for teaching his sword system. Some of the regular leading instructors were examined and given this qualification by Sugano Sensei himself. In fact Sensei was about to set up and implement the second level of qualification when his final illness intervened.

Because of the systematisation of the method of teaching, the manner of instruction at Maredsous involves much more instruction and explanation than was common in any of Sugano Sensei's other classes, a methodology maintained at Maredsous up to today. It was this very system that helped solve a dilemma which arose after Sensei's death as to what role the younger generation instructors were now to fulfil at

Maredsous, when more senior instructors such as Tony Smibert and Louis van Thieghem started instructing there at the highest level.

Since those originally attending the GIAS during Sensei's life-time were long-term students of Sugano Sensei, there was originally less need to speak of or explain the assumptions underlying the training, the methodology and even the approach to training. After Sensei's passing, what now needs to be provided at these schools needed to be made more explicit, with a whole range of new people from Belgium and the Netherlands attending, some of whom are not familiar with Sensei's methods or his sword patterns.

I was interested to see that the GIAS provided a similar approach to teaching at our national schools, since the assumptions underlying the training were made explicit; then there were clear demonstrations of the technical aspects of training (including the form of the sword patterns). These two aspects have become the part of the core responsibility of the younger or middle generation of instructors at the GIAS, who had received formal permission from Sugano Sensei to teach his sword system. The third aspect included insights into the unlimited potential and the possible interpretations of Sugano Sensei's teachings: this is the role of the highest echelon of senior instructors at the GIAS.

How did this come about?

It was after Sensei's death, when Tony Smibert Shihan got the call from Louis van Thieghem in Belgium asking for our assistance and guidance with the teaching at the school. That in turn has led to our other Trustees, Robert Botterill Shihan and Hanan Janiv Shihan, going to teach not only at the GIAS, but also at other schools and dojos in Belgium in an effort to perpetuate Sugano Sensei's heritage. In order to sustain the wonderful bridge which has been built with Sugano Sensei's students in Belgium, we are in turn honoured to regularly invite Louis to teach at our national schools.

So it was that the instruction at Maredsous, in keeping with Sensei's custom there, was more detailed and explicit than I had been used to in Australia. It was also a very slow process, since all explanations had to be translated twice in most cases - with French, English and Flemish the common languages. The instruction was certainly cosmopolitan - with instruction from Australia (Tony, Jikou and myself), the Dutch (Hans Belder, for example), and of course, mainly from the Belgian side, led by Louis, then the two "Michaël's". (Sadly Christophe Depaus was unable to attend due to an emergency eye operation). We also had Bob Hill from Trowbridge in the UK - who started with Sugano Sensei soon after Tony Smibert himself did, but who has been resident in the UK for many years now.

How did the venue at Maredsous contribute to this unique format?

The great advantage of the venue at Maredsous is that it reflects Sugano Sensei's original idea for events where like-minded students interested in his method and philosophy

of study could come together in a close-knit community to spend time not only carefully studying the unique aspects of his approach to Aikido, including his sword system, but also to do so in a spirit of fellowship and mutual support. This is exactly what has also happened in Belgium, with close bonds formed between long-term students who have attended Sugano Sensei's schools there, and elsewhere.

The interesting thing is that this is exactly the sort of setting and feeling that was fostered at our Summer and Winter Schools in Australia, especially at Camp Yarramundi, where during the 1990's we found a venue which was close to nature – in that case on the banks of the Grose River, out of town, in the midst of a natural setting amongst the trees – just like the dojo at Maredsous which is open on one side to the adjoining forest. Most people lived in at Yarramundi, with everyone gathering together in the evening to share stories and get to know each other, as is the case at Maredsous. The similarity extends to the very basic food, accommodation and facilities. The basic accommodation certainly encouraged social interaction in the evenings, bringing people together as they spent more time together – having to make your own fun, with no TV or internet to provide distractions.

Nowadays it's true that as we get older, we like our creature comforts, better food and a better standard of accommodation. However we now find ourselves without a common evening meeting area and now with televisions in our rooms, and with many nearby attractions to draw us away from spending time together – especially as many people choose to live outside the school venue.

So what were the benefits of living in?

Apart from avoiding a twice daily commute, by spending each day and evening together, by making our own fun with everyone playing games and putting on silly concerts, by sweating on the mat all day and then spending time talking and having fun together, we certainly got to know each other a lot better, and we formed more of a family bond. That's partly why those bonds of friendship with people we might only see once or twice a year run so deep – we had the opportunity to get to know each other better, both on and off the mat. And that is exactly what I observed at Maredsous: many students who shared the bond of training seriously under Sugano Sensei for many years had formed friendships, at times strong and enduring, which greatly enriched their lives. Whenever I go to Summer or Winter School, I very much look forward to spending time with this extended Aikido family. Never having had any contact with any relatives beyond my own immediate family, it was always a great pleasure for me to catch up with various people whom I had grown to like and admire over the years. How much greater is the pleasure to actually train with people you know and like? You would also have plenty of opportunity to talk to your seniors, your peers and your juniors about questions and issues about Aikido, as well as to talk about such things as your family, and life in general. You could draw upon the benefit of a large range of different experience, from various walks of life, and with a huge range of Aikido experience. This undoubtedly played a huge role in the growth of my devotion to Aikido, and in particular to the wonderful group of people in Aiki Kai Australia.

We can't recreate the past, but we *can* be mindful of the benefits of spending time together both on and off the mat. Or you could consider living in at national schools, and making a bit of an effort to get to know your fellow trainees off the mat as well as on the mat. On a local level, by doing

such things as attending local social functions, you can make new friends and share your Aikido journey with people who are going through the same trials and tribulations, who have been through the mill, and who might give you a new perspective that might help you on your journey. This is also so in relation to TTC visits, when nearly always there is a social occasion associated with the TTC, attended by the teacher of the TTC. Questions are generally not encouraged whilst on the mat. However by attending these social occasions, you might well get the opportunity to ask the teacher about all those issues which perplex or trouble you; and you also then have the opportunity to find out about the instructor, and about his or her Aikido experiences over many years of training.

So there is a common thread running between the schools run by Sugano Sensei in both Belgium and Australia: these schools are the opportunity to pursue both study and fellowship, as Sugano Sensei himself put it. As the study of Aikido is enhanced by the benefits of fellowship, so the fellowship is enhanced by the benefits of study. With such rich benefits from this mutually beneficial interaction, our national schools provide an ideal opportunity to enrich our understanding through our links to others, and to enrich our links to others through our training. No wonder so many people keep turning up year after year to our schools - it's become a treasured opportunity to learn in the midst of an extended family for me and for all those who have attended over the years.

Other commemorative events

After the GIAS itself a commemorative Buddhist Ceremony was held in the same Tibetan monastery in the Belgian countryside at which all Belgian students had marked the passing of Sugano Sensei 5 years ago. This ceremony marked the 5th anniversary of Sensei's passing and was initiated thanks to Danny Leclerre Shihan of the Belgian Francophone Aikido Association ("AFA"), who kindly hosted us at a dinner afterwards. At the ceremony itself, Jikou Sugano, Tony Smibert and myself spoke, thanking AFA for their initiative and reflecting on the occasion.

3 Generations School

On the weekend following the conclusion of the GIAS, a seminar was held in Brussels which brought together diverse instructors to celebrate the 3 generations of students who continue to follow Sugano Sensei's direction: those who mainly learnt directly from Sensei, those who learnt mainly indirectly from Sensei during his life, through his teachers, and those who have started to learn about Sensei since his death. What was remarkable about this seminar was seeing the most senior instructors working together to honour Sugano Sensei's memory. With a leading part played by Shihans such as Tony Smibert, Louis van Thieghem, Dany Leclerre and Aziz Belhassane, there were also classes by other Belgians who have visited us: the two "Michaël's" and Benoit Toulotte, for example.

In future years, we hope to organize a group to attend the GIAS in Belgium – but not perhaps next year due to the holding of the IAF Seminar and the associated Aiki Kai Australia Japan tour in late September.

In Memory of Matthew Lo Sensei
1948 - 2015

One of our dear friends and senior aikidoka in New South Wales - Matthew Lo passed away on Friday 23 October 2015 after a courageous battle with cancer. Brother to George Lo Sensei, uncle to Sean Lee and devoted father and husband, he was a person whose values, and commitment to aikido were exemplary. Humble, serious yet capable of a real Jackie Chan sense of humour, Matthew trained with vigour and care for each and every one of his partners. All who trained with him were enriched and bettered by the experience. He lived and taught aikido through Sugano Shiban's moral code and continued his strong connection with Sensei's teaching throughout his aikido life.

The following comments are from his friends and relatives, all of whom shared an abiding and lasting love for aikido and enjoyed sharing that love with Matthew and a great friendship with him. We will all miss him but we will never forget him.

Andrew Dzedzic Sensei: A trainee and teacher of great focus, seriousness and dedication, Matthew Lo had a great love of Aikido that not only came through the intensity and focus of his training, but in the standard and dedication of the students whom he taught - and some of whom are now themselves teaching and following his example.

Steve Armfield Sensei: Mathew was a quiet achiever, he never made a fuss or tried to draw attention to himself, but just got on with what had to be done, all the while making an exceptional contribution to NSW Aikido. I always enjoyed our training, which was both robust and cooperative. I also enjoyed his company off the mat, whether it be a quiet conversation, or, as it was at times, a more boisterous exchange. I will miss him.

Tatsu Takahashi Sensei: I have practiced with Matthew more than four years at Sutherland dojo since I came and stayed at Wollongong. Matthew gave us various waza or techniques, which I have enjoyed very much. Thank you, Matthew.

May his soul rest in peace.

Wayne Shiels and Machiko Hirata Sensei: Machiko and I were very sorry to hear of the passing of Matthew. I considered Matthew to be a model Aikido student. He trained with sincerity and integrity, and respect for his partner and for the art. One always felt that it was an enriching experience to have practiced with Matthew. He was one of our Aikido gems, and will be sadly missed.

Austin James Sensei: I was honoured and privileged to train with Matthew. He brought humility, dedication and humour to every lesson and great compassion. Thanks Matthew

Jikou Sugano Sensei: Mathew's presence was quiet and gentle; he brought integrity and enthusiasm to a class. He was energetic, sincere and considerate of others, an example to us all.

The last class I shared with Matthew had finished, and as others moved around thanking each other, we caught each other's eye at a distance, his face smiling, happy. We nodded, bowed and thanked each other.

Paul Parrish: Matthew was my Sensei, mentor and friend. There are no words to express the debt I owe him and how much I miss him. Sutherland dojo will never be the same. R.I.P Matthew.

Eri Atkinson: Matthew Sensei was a quiet person, yet knew exactly what was going on. He had eyes to see through people. He was the glue that kept everyone together as one. Our memories of Matthew Sensei will live with us forever.

Justin Cogley: I will miss Matthew, miss training with him and miss his presence after training, at coffee. If I knew Matthew at all, it was mostly through practicing Aikido because he didn't say much or share much outside of training. He was very private, perhaps shy even. He remained private to the end. I didn't know he was sick, but I respect that about him, his decision to be private.

He was his own man with his own compass in life and he set an example to a whole lot of aikidoka about training with sincerity but, also flavoured with his own sense of humour - humour that might involve giving a little bit of pain to uke, with a smile, of course. He had a rock-like quality about his training and his personality; "Rock-like" in the sense of being strong and grounded. Training with Matthew could be intimidating at times, especially if he was feeling in the mood to 'teach' you about something lacking in your technique. He didn't hurt you though, not really! You just felt that he could do so very easily, if he wanted to. I will miss him and I take comfort in knowing that his presence will always be there in the dojo in some way, not only through his direct students but also in all of us who trained and learned with him. A heartfelt thanks for those painful lessons, and I look forward to seeing your presence on the mat Matthew, and perhaps at coffee too.

Nancy Ho: Matthew was a generous, patient, selfless, caring friend and teacher. I feel extremely lucky and thankful to have the opportunities to spend time with Mathew. He will be dearly missed.

San Trang: Matthew is my friend, my sensei and my mentor. His patience, dedication and quiet encouragement allowed me to grow. I will miss him greatly, but know he will always be remembered and holds a special place in many people's heart... people he has touched.

Youz Iqbal: Thank you Matthew Lo Sensei for your Beautiful Love and Kindness. It has been an honour and a wonderful experience to meet, train and learn from you. My sincere Ki of Love to all of your Family, Students and Friends.

Margaret Carter: Matthew was genuinely humble and caring with a wonderful quiet humour, and truly rewarding to train with. Matthew will be sadly missed, but not forgotten. He will always remain part of the rich tapestry of our Aikido family.

Mike Smith: For fifteen years, Matthew has been my Sensei. His warmup sequence was the first one I learned, and is still the one that feels 'right' to me. I admired Matthew's sense of care for his students, always generously giving his time to prepare us for gradings. For months before them, he would drill the syllabus into us - often introducing techniques that weren't even on the syllabus - that 'might be asked for'. We sometimes believed that Matthew was throwing these in just to keep us on our toes. Whenever I've graded, I felt I was grading more for Matthew than for the grading panel. Matthew had very high standards, and I've always wanted my aikido to reflect those standards.

Our obligation and our privilege now is to maintain Matthew's legacy at Sutherland. We will do our utmost. Farewell Matthew, through my aikido I will try to honour you.



Keeping Doctors Safe at Work – Aikido and Domestic Violence

by Dr Alfredo Mori

Dr Alfredo Mori
Emergency Physician
Alfred Hospital
Melbourne.



Felicia Birman,
Teacher and Educa-
tor, Bachelor of Science,
Diploma of Education and
Masters of Environmen-
tal Science from Monash
University.

Not long after the 50th anniversary summer school the Royal Australian College for General Practitioners (RACGP) contacted Aikikai Victoria, requesting a forum by aikido practitioners at the forthcoming state RACGP conference in June this year. This was a result of positive feedback from a demonstration and special class given at the Alfred Hospital by Alfred Camilleri sensei and myself last year. The conference theme was: "Broken Mind, Body and Soul: The ugly truth of family violence" (<http://www.racgp.org.au/yourracgp/faculties/victoria/events/wigp2015/>).

Linda Godfrey Sensei forwarded this communication to Camilleri Sensei and me. The conference dates were scheduled for June 13 and 14, and given our experience in demonstrating aikido in the workplace which was an event demonstrated at the Alfred Hospital just over a year ago, and reported in this journal(*volume 4 #2*), Alfred and I were

thrilled to be involved once again. At training one evening Greg Giannis, shodan, suggested we ask Felicia Birman, rokudan, and one of Aiki Kai Australia's leading female Aikidoka, to lead the conference session. With her Bachelor of Science and Diploma of Education we felt she would be able to present Aikido in a manner other Doctors and Medical Scientists would appreciate. This was a great idea and when asked Birman Sensei kindly agreed to do it.

So it was that Birman sensei, Camilleri sensei and I (and our partners) presented ourselves at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne on the Saturday afternoon for the session after lunch, which followed the very poignant and moving talk earlier that morning delivered by Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, on her personal and most tragic experience with domestic violence.

I came to this one hour session ready to teach and help

teach. I left learning more than I expected.

During her prepared talk, “**Keeping Doctors Safe at Work,**” Birman Sensei’s aikido burst from within her with aikido demonstrations to illustrate various points she made. She was enthralling and entertaining, sensitive and practical, as well as for me and others at this conference, an inspiration.

The human voice is an effective weapon of deterrence and alarm, a point she aptly demonstrated which made some of the doctors jump when she exploded with a loud kiai like voice, “STOP.” “DON’T YOU DARE”

As doctors working in hospitals we all know workplace violence against GPs is very real. Birman Sensei asked the audience of thirty doctors, of whom only two were men, their experiences of physical violence at work. I had some scenarios planned in case no one volunteered, but needn’t have worried.

After some didactic points on maintaining eye contact, balance, safe distance, the use of voice, and remaining as calm as you can, Birman Sensei demonstrated basic physical moves to remove herself from my headlocks (using *ushiro kubi shime* as an example), wrist grabs (attacks such as *katate tori ai hanmi* and *katate tori gyaku hanmi*), punch attacks (*chudan tsuki* and *mentsuki*), and pinning her arms over her head against a wall. Escapes and releases or avoidance from all of these common attacks were eye openers to many conference members who had never seen anything like this before. And the ease with which Birman Sensei accomplished this was equally as astonishing for those seeing practical Aikido in action in a normal workplace.

An audience member reminded us that a female GP was

stabbed and killed in her office by a disturbed patient just last year in Melbourne, and so not unexpectedly we were asked about defenses against a knife. Felicia wisely demurred against any specific advice given the constraints of the hour, and what might reasonably be expected to be taught.

And as for us men? —Well, hopefully we looked impressive in our hakama and dogi. Our role was to help demonstrate the points Birman Sensei made within several small groups we worked with throughout the session. Birman Sensei then asked that we revise and reinforce some of the movements on participants to ensure some psychomotor imprinting of what had been described. This active teaching of some basic physical movements was a welcome relief for the audience from the intense experience of passively listening through the morning’s plenary.

The subsequent feedback has been ecstatic. All the Aikikai pamphlets were taken, and we received many requests about membership and training. We then all enjoyed the famous Hotel Windsor high tea offered immediately afterwards.

It is not easy to express the gratitude I feel for Aikikai’s response to this issue in this targeted, vulnerable group of workers: my female colleagues. Most GPs work alone in an office with only a desk between themselves and a patient, if that, and with at best access to a personal alarm.

As in my regular training, I enjoyed the company and tuition of great people who are great teachers, and who on this day did a great thing. I hope it will suffice for me to write that Sugano Sensei would be proud of you. I know I am.

Arigato.



A bit later, after I had time to digest what Felicia Birman Sensei had taught I decided to ask her some questions regarding what she thought about what had just happened.

Sensei thank you so much for your time and effort today. This was a different and more academic audience I guess compared to the ones you have been used to teaching and demonstrating to over the years. May I ask your first thoughts on what you just experienced?

I really enjoyed the experience. I always enjoy sharing Aikido with the broader community. It is such a brilliant martial art. It was a great opportunity to work with doctors, especially women doctors who may face threats to their safety at work. They were a delightful group who were very interested and willing to participate in a session which was at times quite physical. I feel that everyone came away with something, even if it was just a little more confidence. In many circumstances, a confident approach can deter a would-be attacker

You have had some experience in the greater community teaching non martial artists a system or method of self defence based on aikido. In what way was today’s experience similar to your past teachings in those environments? In what ways was it different?

In many ways today’s experience was similar to the classes I have run with teachers in special schools who are confronted with violent children on a daily basis. Aikido lends itself very nicely to non violent avoidance and control in these delicate situations where teachers, and in today’s

case doctors, are faced with the dilemma of protecting themselves but at the same time not harming their student or patient.

Perhaps the only difference was the size of the group. When working with teachers I usually request a smaller group so I can actually pass on some simple and useful techniques. In today's circumstance there were around 30 doctors so it was much more difficult to actually be practical. Having Alfred, Zig and yourself there was very helpful.

As I will mention, I came here to help teach and have left learning more than I could have hoped. I was impressed and subdued by your use of voice. Is this something that has come from you, or perhaps something taught by Sugano Sensei that has not been passed on? If so, do you think it is a loss to the Australian aikido community?

The use of voice – Kiai is common to many martial arts and something that Sugano Sensei integrated into our training. I stress it when teaching self defence particularly to women because it can be a very simple and effective strategy for deterring an attacker. There are many case studies of women who have successfully stopped an attack just with the use of their voice. I don't think Kiai has been lost to the Aikido community. Perhaps it is something that is no longer stressed, although we use Kiai every time we do funakogi.

I noted your refusal to demonstrate defence against weapons, specifically knife attacks, which were specially asked for. Could you elaborate your reasons for doing so given we live in an increasingly weapons obsessed culture?

Defence against a knife attack is dangerous even when you are a skilled practioner. There is no way I could have taught anything effective to an untrained and inexperienced audience in the short time frame available. As I mentioned to the audience, the safest strategy when confronted



with an armed assailant, would be for them to negotiate their way out of the situation or comply with the assailant. Often the intent is to obtain money or drugs and there is no reason why doctors should endanger their life to defend property. Despite the fascination with weapons, statistics indicate that attacks against women in Australia are generally perpetrated by unarmed offenders.

Sensei thank you again for your excellent teaching today. It was asked of a group of women by a group of women. May I ask your thoughts on demonstrating to similar audiences in future, either by yourself or with or by other female aikido students and teachers?

I think that these requests to share Aikido are both a privilege and an opportunity. We definitely should respond to requests from organisations who approach Aik-Kai. It is an opportunity for us to develop a public profile and to be of service to the broader community.

I run my sessions as workshops rather than demonstrations so that the participants can gain some confidence and simple skills. I have had the privilege of working with the wider community and this has allowed me to develop some basic strategies. I have also learned to work carefully with a variety of people, mainly women, who in many circumstances lack physical skills. Unfortunately there are few instructors who have this experience. It is definitely a skill and sensitivity which needs to be developed – to respond spontaneously to scenarios and apply simple Aikido techniques to deal with them. I would be happy to work with other audiences and to share my insights with other instructors.

From: aikido.tas@gmail.com Date: Sun, 17 May 2015 20:57:51 +1000 Subject: Peter Henley Sensei

Dear Friends,

Sadly we write to let you know that Peter Henley Sensei passed away last night in hospital after suffering a stroke during the State Training.

We all feel impacted by this but do take some consolation that he was amongst Aikido friends and community that loved him and that he died peacefully with his family, as were his wishes.

Sincerely, Martin and Bodhi

In memory of Peter Sensei

By David Claridge



Peter Henley was the first person I met when I joined with Aiki-kai around nine months ago.

Ever since then he helped me better understand aikido, to mould my training from previous study in Japan and help me become a better person because of it.

My work and lifestyle has made it difficult at times to attend training, I remember Peter once saying “Even if you don’t want to come to aikido – you still come.” And with that in mind I push myself to come to every lesson that I can.

He would always be there at lessons without fail, his weapons carefully placed by the mats and he would be welcoming to everybody whether they were students or newcomers interested in aikido.

There were even a couple of lessons where I was the only student that came and he would still train, focussing on my technique and guiding me.

I didn’t know him anywhere near as long as many others have but in that short time he had a positive impact on how I understood aikido.

When I learned about the news of his passing I first found it hard to believe, that even though he was senior to us that he was still spry for his age and could give as good he would receive in techniques.

I often asked him what he did outside of aikido, he would simply reply that he was retired and aikido was his life. It was true because he understood it in ways I can’t begin to imagine, he practiced under Sugano Sensei and was able to impart Sugano Sensei’s teachings upon his students.

I was fortunate enough to interview Peter while interning at the local newspaper shortly before his passing. He was eager to assist in offering quotes for the story, he was also filmed training, and pictures were taken. I will never forget the phone call I received from him while at the MCG on ANZAC Day, he had seen the story in the paper and was blown away by it – perhaps more so by the fact that his picture was beside the story.

Peter only ever wanted us to have fun, to try our best and to accomplish our dreams, not only in aikido but in life.

It will be hard to return to the dojo and never seeing his weapons beside the mat again nor his friendly smile, or his chuckle after he saw us do something amazing. But I know that he would want us to continue training and to keep bettering ourselves.

He will be sorely missed by all of the aikido community.

Aikido for me will never be the same.





Aikido in Australia

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SUGANO SHIHAN'S WINTER SCHOOL SYDNEY 2015

with:

Tony Smibert Shihan 7th Dan, Robert Botterill Shihan 7th Dan, Hanan Janiv Shihan 7th Dan



50th Anniversary 'Family' Celebration

