

THE KIAI

Spring 2003

Volume IX, Issue 1

Newsletter of THE AIKIDO INSTITUTE

UPCOMING DEMO AND SILENT AUCTION

June 7th. Save that date. That's the date of the dojo's Demo and Silent Auction. We'll be collecting donations of items, services, goods, etc. from everyone (teachers, students, kids, friends, acquaintances, businesses,



onlookers, wanabes, you name it...) and then putting them up for bid. Highest bidder wins the item while the Aikido Institute/Aiki Integrated Arts scholarship fund gains the financial benefit.

The auction will take place over several days, concluding on Saturday, June 7th. That day we'll be offering an Aikido demonstration open to all. After the demo we'll announce the silent auction winners.

Students, deshi, teachers, kids, parents, neighbors are all encouraged to bid on auction items. When you win an auction item, the amount that you pay over the Fair Market Value of the item may be counted as a charitable contribution and deducted from your income tax.

The Fair Market Value of the items that you donate to be auctioned may also be counted as a charitable contribution and deducted from your income tax. (The Fair Market Value is the price the item would sell for on the open market, taking into consideration its age and condition.) All the funds we generate through the Silent Auction will go towards our scholarship fund. Start bringing in your auctionable items so that we can list them.

Bid early and bid often! Remember:

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

Aikido Demo and Silent Auction

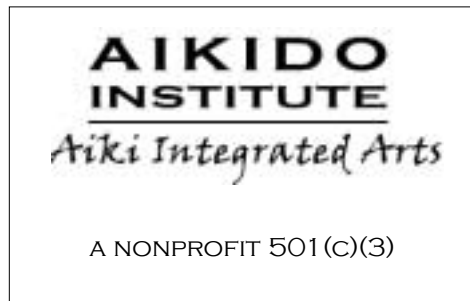
WHY I CHOOSE AIKIDO

Before I joined our dojo in summer of 2001, I had always wondered about this place at the corner of Telegraph and the 51st street for about five years. For a long time, all I saw was the Shoji screen decorated front windows when I drove by the place once in a while. Those Shoji screens had been like "veils" to me because I did not know what was happening inside the place. It said "Aikido Institute." It sounded like a type of martial arts, but what exactly is 'Aikido?'

At the end of those five years that I had occasionally wondered about what this place at the corner was for, a chance lifted those veils for me one evening. I had to stop for the red light right in front of the dojo. And I turned my head to the right to see the open window view of the Aikido Institute for the first time. In there, in that bright white universe, I saw some people training Aikido. (To understand what I said about the appearance of our dojo, you may want to drive by our dojo one evening to see how bright and deep it looks inside from the outside during the evening training hours.)

During the short moment I stopped there in front of the dojo, I saw female, male, young, mid-aged, and senior students training all together. Some were in whites, and some were in white tops and black bottoms. I was able to figure out that those black bottoms have an authority figure right away. It looked quite remarkable inside the dojo with all the dynamic actions going on. And my five year old question was about to be answered that night. As soon as I came back home, I started searching for the information about the Aikido Institute of Oakland in the World Wide Web.

"Wow! This is what I want to learn!" I exclaimed with a joy of discovering something highly precious. The Aikido Institute's webpage introduces the philosophy of Aikido as



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the following: “Aikido teaches students how to harmonize their energy. While practicing how to blend with an opponent’s force, or discovering how to extend energy, or developing the flexibility to work well with a partner, an Aikido student is always learning how to restore harmony both internally and externally.”

Following Wednesday, I decided not to be shy after receiving an invitation email from the Uchideshi to watch the practice session in the evening. The practice session was exactly what I imagined it to be. I was intensely watching all the movements made by students during the practice. (That day, I watched people training so intensely that I was able to do rolls freely by the time when I attended my third practice session—it was for sure the benefit of visual learning experience.) After watching the class, I was highly motivated and happily signed up for three months. That day not only I found out what the place at the corner of Telegraph and the 51st street is for, but also I found that Aikido was what I had been looking for to grow my spiritual inner-self.

By the summer of 2001, it had been a year for me after I graduated from a college in Southern California and moved back to the Bay Area. At that time while working for a company full-time, free from schools for the first time, I often wondered what I had learned in schools through the twenty six years of my life and what I wanted to or needed to learn further. For sure, college education made me smarter than I had been before. But something always seemed to be missing, something deeper to learn that no school I had been focused to offer.

The lessons I needed the most in my life were being aware of my inner-self, being aware of my surroundings, and “the way of living a harmonious life.” And those are the very aspects that I have been learning from practicing Aikido regularly, for about little more than a year and half. Those lessons have much enhanced my life with peace, love, and harmony. And those benefits are why I choose “Aikido”—to live a peaceful, a loving, and a harmonious life.

STEVE LIM



A NEW DOJO, A NEW BEGINNING, A NEW SENSEI

One of my favorite Christmas songs as I was growing up was “You put one foot in front of the other” a little song from the story of Kris Kringle by Rankin and Bass. And of course, my favorite Christmas character is the pink polka dot elephant in “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer”. What does this have to do with anything, or even Aikido? A lot. Whenever I’m faced with challenges or hardships, I always think of that song and about how one day the little unwanted

IF YOU REALIZE THAT ALL
THINGS CHANGE,
THERE IS NOTHING YOU WILL
TRY TO HOLD ON TO.

TAO TE CHING

elephant would finally find a loving home to call its own.

Well, unfortunately, our family had to look for a new Dojo and I had to put those lines and character into practice once again. We decided to try Aikido Institute. I’ve driven by the place so many times in the past 13 years, but never once stepped inside. My first step walking through the door at Aikido Institute was hard. I took a deep breath and told myself one foot in front of the other. We were greeted immediately by a very tall and smiling Uchi-Deshi. We told him we were there to observe the children’s program. Our main goal was to get our daughter, who wanted to continue her Aikido training, into a program as soon as possible. We were going to look at several places, but one look and we were hooked. We saw kids having a lot of fun with a mixture of Aikido and games. The instructor, Leif Branson, was incredible. Watching him have complete control over a wide mixture of students, they looked like they didn’t want class to end. We were all impressed and even Meagan, who is shyer than I, wanted to start the next week. Well, that was easy.

It was less easy for Lars Eric and myself. But after watching Meagan have fun and Leif doing a wonderful job with the kids, I decided to ask if I too could join the group and help with the kids. Of course! Meagan really liked that idea and felt more comfortable with me on the mat. She didn’t say it, but she was having a hard time with the new adjustments. She had to make new friends, which can be very hard sometimes. For the first couple of months she clung to my side before class would start. You don’t even see a hint of that now.

After another month or so, Lars Eric was ready to get on the mat with the children’s program, again making Meagan very happy. And that was the beginning of our slow immersion into Aikido Institute.

I was happy to be back on the mat after my hiatus of a couple of months. But as usual, something was bugging me. I had this incredible urge. I get these urges when I’m about to create something by painting or drawing (or even writing an article like this). But this feeling was different; I had this crazy idea of hosting a get together of my former training partners, who by now were at several other dojos or who had quit Aikido altogether. I looked around for someplace to host it. Little did I know the place I was looking for was right under my feet. Incorporating my husband and J.R. to do all the dirty work, they asked for permission and

determined a good time for the event and Lars Eric sent all the invitations by e-mail, etc. I don't know if J.R. really knows how much all of his help was to us. "Thank you" doesn't even come close.

We were then set for February 2, 2002. We got approval from Kim Sensei even without meeting him. Lars Eric talked to him a couple of times on the phone and was really impressed. Here was a high-ranking Sensei opening up his doors to a couple of aikidoists whom he had never personally met yet. We thought it was a big leap of faith on his part with two strangers, asking to rent the dojo and have a training, get -together of unknown aikidoists.

After J.R. did several nikyos on both wrists, I was set to meet another one of my great challenges. I'm incredibly shy at times and getting in front of 20 plus people to teach Aikido is extremely difficult, especially, when a great number of them out-rank you in more ways than one. I took another deep breath and headed out to begin.

The get-together was a major success. We pulled it off. But during the training a man walked into the dojo and sat down to watch. From pictures I had seen I assumed it was Kim Sensei. I ran over to J.R. and asked him if that was who he was and how should I address him. J.R. just smiled at me and told me, "he's a really nice guy, he's not going to bite." I introduced myself to him for the first time. o friendly and so unassuming he was. That was the beginning with my new Sensei.

I still have many more steps to take before I complete this chapter of my Aikido journey, but "just one foot in front of the other....."

MARTHA EVANS-HOLM



PURRFECT UKEMI

Ukemi, the ability to "receive the technique" and fall safely, is a big part of what drew me to aikido and continues to fascinate me. As I prepare to be uchi deshi, I've been doing extra rolls after class, taking care to stay in close and keep up with my nage, and generally honing in on this key aspect of aikido. As I begin to take more challenging falls, I find my appreciation of ukemi growing exponentially. However, as much as I train and refine my ukemi skills, they don't compare to the inherent talents of my cats, George and Kokyuu. From these feline friends I have much to learn.

According to *The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Dictionary*, definitions of ukemi include "to be acted upon", "passivity", and "the defensive position". These descriptions most certainly apply to my domestic friends, who are *lovingly* subjected to upside down belly scratching and floor

spinning break dance sessions. George in particular, has an uncanny tolerance for such antics. He stays relaxed for the duration until we ridiculous humans tire of the play or he finds an opportunity to escape to another room. I can hardly profess to have such patience and timing myself!

Another way my cats reveal their ukemi abilities is when falling from considerable heights. It is universally accepted that cats will, more often than not, always land on their feet. How do they do it?

From ongoing observation, I've discovered a few of the techniques cats use when falling from human holds. When sensing that a drop is about to happen, Kokyuu struggles to become upright and position herself for the fall. She digs in her claws to stay close and keep her center. Then, as she becomes free, her body completely relaxes. This allows her to rotate in the air and reach the ground in a good landing position. Staying supple also helps her to absorb the fall. We may not necessarily attempt to land on our feet when taking falls, but the principles of good set up, sticking close to nage, and being relaxed during the fall still apply to human ukemi. We just have to train harder to acquire such expertise. ;-)

While my cat analogies are all in good fun, there are practical aikido applications to be extracted from feline/human comparisons. Cats respond appropriately to each moment, whether it requires quick movement or total relaxation. As uchi deshi to be, I aspire to have such good reflexes, both on and off mat.

Perhaps the secret lies in napping...

TAMARA SHULMAN

ON CONTRIBUTIONS

Members and friends of Aikido Institute have had the option of making tax-deductible cash donations to the dojo since we incorporated in 2002 as a California (DM - pls insert our status here) non-profit corporation. There is a rich tradition of other kinds of contributions to the dojo around us every day. Most of the art work that graces the dojo was contributed: The framed photo of Ueshiba Sensei, the current Doshu, behind the counter, and the framed, signed photo of hands, above the counter (Josh Langenthal); the framed photo of Saito Sensei at the College Ave dojo, above the sign-in sheet, and the scroll above the shoe rack (Leif Branson and Maggie Vashel); the giant photo prints above the kitchen and above the back mat (photos by David Papas, prints by Eddie Guardanamas); framed poster of Saito Sensei above counter (yours truly); the lovely green vase on the shelf above the library and other ceramic pieces around the dojo (Geoff Evans); new brochure (photography by David Papas, design by Richard Levitt, printing by Eddie Guardanamas); AI-KI-DO calligraphy by Saito Sensei hanging on our shomen (Saito Sensei); KATSU-HAIYA-BI callig-

raphy by O'Sensei hanging on our shomen, (purchased by Aikido Institute students in 1984). Many other beautiful and mundane items around the dojo were also contributed: photo albums in the library (Megan Sweet); carpet in the storefront (Deborah Maizels); shoe racks in the store front (Geoff Evans); the weapons racks (Geoff Evans). this is just a partial list of the items I know about. Who contributed the refrigerator? The cast sword hilt on the shomen? The many community boken and jo we enjoy the use of?

Don't forget about the contribution of labor around the dojo facility. The dressing rooms, office and uchi deshi rooms, were all constructed by volunteer members. Countless members and uchi deshi have contributed to the maintenance and improvement of the dojo continuously since the 1970.

Our dojo certainly doesn't need more "stuff". This is not a call to contribute things for the sake of contributing (please don't!). You might want to increase your awareness of these items, however, and perhaps acknowledge the giver if you have the opportunity. Most importantly, when we speak of contributions, remember that the most highly valued contributions, by far, are the ones we make when we participate in aikido training. One's time, sweat, toil, growth, and joy in the pursuit of O'Sensei's art, shared with our training partners, are priceless contributions without peers. See you on the mat

PETER SLOTE



AN AI-KEY DISCOVERY IN DENVER

There we sat, Kathy Sempai and I, in the front seats of that stubborn car, cruising around Denver looking for a restaurant called Chipotle. A really satisfying sense of elation settled in as we wound our way around. About a block from our destination, we saw some of the other people from our dojo. The group consisted of 4-5 people, but the only one I remember is Jennifer. We honked and waved. Jen's face went completely stark from shock. Her body jerked upright with disbelief and I've never seen someone's jaw drop so low as when she pointed towards us. She turned to her companions for an explanation, trying to make sense of it all. Kathy and I drove on by, roaring with laughter, feeling even better than we had moments before. A sense of destiny and completion filled the air, like everything in the world made harmonious sense. We felt victorious.

Victory was the farthest thing I felt at the close of the first night of the Saito Memorial Seminar in Denver. The Buddhist temple was packed with people when we first arrived within minutes of the opening

ceremonies. My only concern at that moment was to get changed and train. After following a labyrinth of registration lines, we were led into a damp wintry abyss of a changing room where the crowd inside steered Tamara and I into a corner. I remembered storing the keys to the rental car in my pants pocket for easy access later.

The first night of the seminar was dynamic. The mat was saturated with bodies, both old and new faces. Even though there did not appear to be room for ukemi, the gym was still energetic. It was invigorating to see Hitohiro Saito Sensei execute a variety of wrist locks and pins from various attacks. Ki was definitely in the air!

At the close of the first night, we shuffled into the changing room enthusiastic and excited. It was hard to contain my exhilaration for being in Denver, on this dojo road trip with my friends. It was getting late and the hunger pangs were beginning to set in. As we scurried to the cars, I realized that the keys were not where I put them. In fact, they were no where to be found! Tamara and I searched everywhere, the changing room, the gym floor, the lost and found table, my backpack. I had even inquired with the custodial staff. It had vanished. Simply gone.

While at dinner, after receiving solace from everyone, I made some calls to the rental car agency. They gave me a key code for a replacement key. It was getting late. We were all exhausted from the traveling and the training. The keys should turn up tomorrow; someone (out of more than 200 people) would have seen them. Or we can just have another set made. Simple.... It might be mentioned at this point that we just had two vehicles for the whole weekend for the whole group. The young, spry looking mini-SUV type thing was a good car, just good enough to fit everyone and everyone's stuff in it. Its function was to take the group to and from the airport and to the party Saturday night. Our hotel was 5-7 blocks from the seminar through the cold Denver streets.

Following Kim Sensei's lead, we walked through the brisk cold air that night to dinner and to and from the hotel. Everyone enjoyed each other's company, but the nagging question, "Where are the keys?" always bothered us.

The next morning we walked to the seminar and paid parking for the car we couldn't drive. We thought, "Someone will make an announcement. These are Aikidoka. The keys will turn up in the lost and found."

The hosts at Nippon Kan made friendly and regular announcements about our keys. I went up to the lost and found a couple of times and they acted like 20 other people had just come up asking the same questions. No keys! We could not find the keys to the car! Tamara started to worry.

Jen started to worry. Everyone started to worry. I tried not to worry about it and just kept on training.

I woke up Saturday morning feeling very tired. I dreamt about misplacing the keys. There was a slight obsessive-compulsive feeling that I had just overlooked them somewhere. Still they were no where. Both Tamara and I pursued the lost keys with the lost and found crew. Nothing. It took a little bit of effort, but after some friendly uchi deshi persuasion, Tamara was able to get the Nippon Kan personnel to announce the lost keys regularly.

I tried not to worry about them and sure enough the first session Saturday morning was pure therapy. Hitohiro Saito Sensei covered kokyunages for two hours. During lunch and while the dojo was rehearsing for the party's skit, I made a few more phone calls to set up for a locksmith to make another set of keys. Aside from the costly \$75, everything seemed to be going smoothly.

The next 2 hour session for the day covered shihonages. I was in bliss. Lost keys, what keys? We had a 30 minute break afterwards. At this time, I set up for the locksmith to meet me at the parking lot. Both Tamara and JR volunteered to accompany me, all of us waiting outside in frosty downtown Denver in our damp gis.

I had asked Tamara to go back to training when the locksmith did not show up after 30 minutes. After all, three Aikidoka seemed a little too much just for one set of keys. I later found out, after going through 3 locksmiths, multiple and mostly unpleasant conversations with the rental car agency, missing a 2 hour session of iriminages, Stan Pranin's talk about Saito Sensei, and losing almost five hours of seminar time, that there can never be too many Aikidoka around you.

Things got desperate at this point. We had missed a significant part of the seminar. Jen and I were sitting in the cold parking lot. The rental car agency provided the key code for the car. But the car, being brand new, did not have accessible key codes for the locksmith. The locksmith said it's the rental agency's fault. The rental agency was completely unresponsive. The situation was ridiculous. I talked to the manager. I talked to the manager's manager. I talked to the manager's manager's manager and still no luck.

Did I mention they did not have spare keys?

It appeared that we would have to find an Isuzu dealer to open the car on a weekend for us. The other option involved towing the car to the airport and ½ the group having to pay for a shuttle. This also involved having one person, me, ride in the tow truck to the rental car agency. I couldn't even imagine the paper work problems involved in the process after that. The agency would pin all costs on us for sure.

After most people had left the seminar, Jen and I went back into the building and retraced her steps. We went down to the changing room and re-enacted the whole scene. We surmised that she was folding her jeans over the trash can and that the keys may have fallen out into the trash can.

I dug through it to Jen's dismay. I swept a broomstick under everything I could find. We looked everywhere.

We kind of scared the cleaning crew as they came into the room. They said the trash from Friday night went in one big bag and out to the dumpster. Jen and I both shuddered at the thought of the keys being in the dumpster. It was only a theory anyway. We were not going dumpster diving to find them. So we looked everywhere else with no luck.

We absolutely could not shake this dilemma out of our minds as Tamara drove us to the Saturday night party. But after a few glasses of sake and a few throat singing songs, the whole situation became bearable to say the least. The whole dojo group got up and sang a song to the party. Everyone enjoyed themselves. We all felt very happy and very close.

Afterwards Kim Sensei once again led the group and insisted on walking the 11 blocks back to the hotel. Don't ask me why. It was cold as hell. But again, with all that sake, none of us cared. A young rowdy group from the Berkeley dojo even joined us. We strolled through the dark icy night laughing and joking and having fun. Things really started to get fun when Kayla Sensei started a snow field randori with a few of us. On one side, people were making bokken snow angels, on the other bodies flying through the air. It all made complete sense at the time.

The moment turned simply exquisite as we walked further through Denver and hit an alley way. Kim Sensei said something to Kayla Sensei. Kayla Sensei said something to Kim Sensei. Next thing I know, they were stripping off their jackets for what appeared to be a fight, yet both Sensei's laughed and smiled through all of posturing, whooping and hollering. I did not know what to do. Should I cheer for Kim Sensei? Should I cheer for Kayla? Should I run away? I really had a hard time figuring it out. So I just resigned to stay and watch with fascination.

Right there in that dark alley, two bodies converged in a set of attacks and throws and counters that continuously evolved, undulated, swerved and changed. It was Cyrano DeBergerac on a poetic roll or D'Artagnon with a sword. Everyone watched and admired as it ended with a good natured hug. We all went back to the hotel for a little more hanging out and a very restful sleep.

The final day of the seminar came very quickly. I couldn't believe that we would be going home in a matter of hours. At breakfast, we still couldn't avoid discussing the elusive keys. The keys were ultimately my responsibility but the support everyone gave me definitely eased my anxiety. I felt incredibly fortunate



to be a part of such a wonderful group of people. Sentiments consumed me all throughout the trip.

Sunday's weapons class came and went. The seminar was over. People were beginning to disperse. Still no keys had turned up. My fears and worries had been curtailed to the likes of a lurking shadow. There was no use in worrying now. We had decided to tow the car to the airport right before leaving. The consequences of that was something to worry about later.

As we were about to leave for lunch, JR gave me a somewhat encrypted response when I asked him where he was going. Nothing mattered to me at the moment and I figured he would find his way to Chipotle. Due to exhaustion, I found myself very subdued on the walk to Chipotle. I settled on just enjoying the briskness of it all and the conversation between Kim Sensei, Janet and Tamara. As we spot the restaurant, while waiting at the crosswalk, I see two familiar faces drive by. It took me a good couple of seconds to realize it was JR and Kathy Sempai in the infamous rental car. How, why, when? My thoughts confounded me. Neurons were misfiring all over.

So the seminar had come to an end. I waited out front trying to talk to the AAA people, which Deborah Sempai had donated to our cause. I volunteered to go with the tow truck after lunch. Kathy Sempai walked by me at some point and mentioned she was going to go out looking around the dumpster. "Oh, I said. I'll meet you out there in a minute."

I handled some business with the AAA and then ran out to meet Kathy. Jen asked where I was going and I said, "I've got to go meet Kathy. I'll see you at lunch." She looked kind of perturbed, but I did not want her to worry more about the car. Also, she has enough problems with dirt, let alone dumpsters. I did not want a sanitation lecture.

I jogged around the side to find Kathy standing there. I could see her breath clearly as she said, "I looked in the dumpster. There didn't seem to be too many bags. All we need to do is jump in there to fish them out. We can look through all of the bags."

I replied, "We meaning me, right?"

"Right," she said with a friendly laugh.

I had to shoot around the other side of the building because a fence blocked my entrance to the dumpster area. Then before you know it, I jumped into the dumpster and started throwing out garbage bags. There were about 12-14 in all. I'll spare you the details, but the worst of it was some rotten bananas. Most of it was just normal trash.

The process was making me nervous though because the keys were not showing up. We finished ¼ and then ½ and then ¾'s of the bags and nothing showed. I dove in again and retrieved a few I didn't want to touch before. We looked through those.

People came out the back door at some point seeing me in the dumpster and Kathy Sempai digging through the trash. Even when I explained, they thought we were very strange.

Finally there were just two bags left. We opened them up.

"Got it!" Kathy said, and I didn't believe her. I thought she was just fooling with me.

"Prove it." I replied.

Then she turned to me with Mocha or something on her hands and inside all the junk and rubbish were the keys. "That's it!" I yelled.

We joined hands and cheered and hugged and jumped up and down. We found the keys! It was really incredible. After all of the hours of work and money and worry, we finally found them. It just felt so good.

Kathy Sempai and I got in the car with supreme satisfaction and drove to find Chipotle. I called Deborah Sempai to tell her the news and she was so excited and happy. We got a hero's welcome when we arrived at lunch. Everyone felt so very satisfied. It felt like a big burden unloaded from the whole group. Sensei smiled. Jen clapped. Leif and Tamara shook their heads with appreciation. Jonathan looked at us with wonderment. Yet no one would shake our hands.

Thanks to Kathy Sempai and JR for taking the initiative to "dumpster dive." Special thanks to Deborah Sempai and Tamara for offering their AAA benefits and patiently waiting with us at the temple Saturday night. And to our wonderful Denver group for all they put up with during this AiKey fiasco. On an after note, a complaint letter has been sent to Thrifty. I received an automatic reply saying my complaint was received and I would hear from them shortly for a follow up. As expected, I'm still waiting for the follow up.

JR RICHARDS AND JENNIFER VELASCO



TEACHING CHILDREN BUDO (MARTIAL ARTS)

[This is something I wrote after answering a non-practitioner's questions about what I gain from teaching the Children's class.]

For almost five years now, I have been teaching martial arts to children. I have always been an assistant instructor, but one with a fair amount of influence and input. The martial art that I have practiced for thirteen years and taught for five is a traditional Japanese martial art called "Aikido". I became involved in this role for that most typical of reasons for many parents: because my daughters also began practicing. However, this quickly became something of a vocation for me, my reason for getting through the work week. I've

recently been thinking about why teaching Aikido to children is so important to me, and I've realized that a large part of it is that I gain much of value from the children themselves.

What I gain from the Children.

For myself, I've always found that my practice of Aikido has served as a refuge, a way to heal myself from the rigors of the day and regain the energy spent dealing with the buffets and blows of everyday life. However, I found that I always particularly looked forward to teaching the children's class. I seemed to be drawing something from the children that I wasn't getting elsewhere. When the work week was at its worst, when I couldn't see any value to anything that I was doing, when I felt I was drowning in a sea of bureaucracy: there was always the children's class to look forward to.

I think this is because I've always found children to be more overt than adults. They are more blatant, more forward, more rude, more challenging, more questioning, more in your face, and less inhibited. Their feelings are on their face and in their skin. They aren't as skilled at the social conventions — which is simply another way of saying that they are less skilled at hiding how they feel about things. This is a refreshing contrast to the masks and innuendoes of the adult world.

If "Harry" doesn't like to work with "Sally", it is quite noticeable. "Harry" will visibly snub "Sally", wandering all over the mat, never looking at "Sally", who is also wandering all over the mat, looking for someone, anyone to train with, but all the partners must already be taken, because they simply can't see anyone else available.

If there is an exercise they don't like to do, you'll hear it, loudly. If they think it's time to play games, you'll hear it, promptly. If they think you aren't doing it right, you'll hear the correction, swiftly. They will question you, constantly.

I like being challenged. My background is in mathematics, and in that discipline, like the discipline of martial arts, there is little room for untruth. A technique either works or it doesn't. A theorem is either true, or it isn't. Children will absolutely keep you honest. You absolutely have to know why it is critical to always step off of the line of attack. You have to know why it is important to take your partner's balance as soon as possible. You have to know why breath is important, why kiai (the shout) is important, why it is important to know when to move omote (straight into and in front of your partner), and when to move ura (around and behind your partner).

Questions will come from completely unexpected directions. Statements that seem, initially, to have absolutely nothing to do with what is being demonstrated will be brought forth. The children are endlessly creative: they will propose the most improbable scenarios, the most interesting situations, the most off-the-wall questions. Children teach you to expect the unexpected.

There is a saying in Aikido: "Takemusu Aiki". This means "spontaneous technique". It implies responding to a situation in the most appropriate way to that particular situation. It implies living in the moment, and seeing the moment and the situation for what it is, rather than pigeonholing, stereotyping, or relying on predigested responses.

Children are the embodiment of "Takemusu Aiki". They have to be, because they don't have enough experience to have collected an overabundance of pigeonholes, stereotypes, and responses.

Another way to think of it is that children simply can't avoid having a "Beginners Mind". My initial interest in martial arts was piqued by two books, one of which was entitled "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind". The idea of always keeping a childlike, creative mind has always appealed to me, because of this book, and because of what I have read since about and by people such as Albert Einstein and Richard Feynman.

It is important to remember that teachers are always themselves learning, always themselves being taught. It is important to remember this fact, both as a teacher and as a student. The relationship works in both directions, and nourishment travels in both directions. The image that the art is being transmitted from the top down is only partly accurate. It is certainly true that the technical details travel from the more experienced to the less experienced, but the reasons for practicing, the heart, soul, and joy of it often travel in the opposite direction. The shining eyes and smiles of the newcomers remind the possibly jaded senior what originally attracted him to the practice.

LARS ERIC HOLM



NEW MAT COVER FAQs

1. What was replaced?
Just the canvas cover of the mat.
2. Why was it replaced?
The old cover lasted remarkably long (23-years), but was encrusted with many layers of paint. It could not be resurfaced adequately or economically.
3. What is beneath the cover?
Dense rubber mats called "judotechs", on top of a bed of shredded tire.
4. What's different about the new cover?
It has wider panels and fewer seams; it has "French" seams which hide the edges of the material; the baseboard that secures the cover along the walls will (when finished) completely enclose the edge of the mat.
5. What's the same?
The new cover is made out of the same 12oz. cotton duck canvas that the old one was.

6. What kind of paint was used on the new cover?
Highway stripping paint. Other dojos have applied this kind of paint to their canvas covers and not required re-painting for many years.
7. How many patches were on the old cover?
One-hundred-and-twenty-five.
8. How many patches on the new cover?
Five. Can you find them?
9. How will I know if I'm doing my ikkyo pins correctly if I can't see the paint chips on the side of my partner's face when he/she gets up?
We'll figure something out....

PETER SLOTE



MORE ABOUT AIKIDO AND PRE-SCHOOL TEACHING

One of the really interesting things about being a pre-school teacher is the un-learning I have to do in order to be a better teacher for the children. Most particularly, I need to keep unlearning my emotional need for things to develop in particular ways. I can plan and plan and plan various curricula, but they may not work at all. And then I need to adapt to what the actual circumstances are in the classroom at the time. To me, that's a lot like training in Aikido.

In Aikido (at least for me), I have had to repeatedly learn to adapt to the specific circumstances of my training, whether that means my various training partners, my health or energy level at that moment, or the nature of the class being taught. It is especially true in gyu waza or randori – I'll want to do a specific technique or even more than one technique and nothing is coming. These are the times I need to adapt to what is happening on the mat, because what I want to happen in my head isn't reality.

And it's taken me a long time – years – to relax about my rate of progress or proficiency (or my personally perceived lack thereof). But I think that this mental breakthrough is helping my training and helping my life outside the dojo as well. In fact, I think that this part of the Aiki path is one of the strongest reasons I have kept training through the years. I feel that I am becoming a more proficient person (hopefully, a better person, too, but that's a different essay).

And this aspect of personal growth through training is something I am trying to bring to my students and I think that they can get it, even though they're only 3, 4 and 5 years old. Most of what children in this age range are learning is how to work with others, how to be in society. Sure, it's very important for them to work on letters and numbers and hand-eye coordination and more, but so much of their learning is how not to “melt down” when things or people make

them anxious or scared or angry. They need to learn how to share (even when they might not want to), to take turns, to respect other peoples' feelings and bodies.

So, how does that relate to training? Over the past few months, Kim Sensei has summed it up nicely (at least for me) in a couple of different ways. One time he said, “I'm trying to teach you to respond proficiently in increasingly adrenalized situations,” and another time “I'm hoping to increase your personal buffer zone, so that you have more time to choose your reaction to action directed towards you by a person or the world.” At least that's the way what he was saying stayed in my brain. It's kind of philosophical and intellectual, the way I remember it, but my body remembers these concepts in a very down to earth way.

And as a pre-school teacher, these are some of the most important things I am trying to teach my students, in ways that are developmentally appropriate, of course. Mostly, this is done through modeling the behavior and bearing that we want the children to emulate. We can teach them things, but we show them how to be. And the more I train, the better I feel I am doing at being. Sure, my shoulders are still stiff and my technique (all of my techniques) will always need work, but I am changing through and due to my training in Aikido in ways that seem to be helping the world be a better place. At least at my pre-school.

JOSHUA LANGENTHAL



KOKYU

When I left the nurse's conference room to make rounds, the scene was typically chaotic. Nurses from the previous shift moved from room to room trying to put the finishing touches on the day's documentation, sometimes darting to the medication room to retrieve pain and anti-nausea medications. Patients walked, held aloft by the waist by physical therapists, with IV poles in tow negotiating the obstacle course of broken equipment and rushing personnel.

“It's nice to see you up and about,” I would say cheerily. Sometimes this was received warmly, “Yes, it is”, or with a sheepish smile that says to me, what else can I do? Other times I am ignored as they stare blankly ahead, perhaps tuning out the clamor of ringing phones, beeping IV pumps, beeping drug dispensaries, beeping blood pressure machines, overhead announcements. More alarms every day, it seems. Like that scene in Monty Python's *Meaning of Life*: “Where is that machine that goes bing? We paid a lot of money for that machine!”

Ruth was sitting up in bed when I entered her room. She looked miserable, unable to draw a full breath. Her chest

heaved with the effort, but she sat pale and tremulous, holding a pillow to her stomach.

She smiled as she saw me, and I noticed the view outside her window. Mellow glow of the slanting sun melted into green craggy hills full of trees and long shadows like out of a Chinese painting. The Claremont Hotel stood out brightly like a palace of bone.

“How are you doing,” I asked. Her face broke into a quizzical frown. She seemed at the point of tears. Then she shrugged.

“I’m ok,” she said, “how are you, what’d you do over the weekend?”

“I went to Tahoe,” I said, “for a special training in Aikido.”

She sat up sharply, and her eyes shone with sudden fire. “You do aikido? So do I!” she said, “or I used to. I trained for several years. I was a black belt.”

With great animation she related her years in Aikido. Initial awkwardness. Developing confidence, becoming comfortable with high falls. Then her voice trailed off. She grimaced and took another breath like dragging on a cigarette.

“Can I listen to your lungs?” I asked. She nodded and I brought my stethoscope to her back. Very diminished breath sounds. A rubbing, grating sound like plastic bubble wrap being popped. It occurs when one layer of the pleural membrane of the lung slides over the other during breathing.

Most of us take for granted the smooth transition between light and deep breathing. This is thanks to the small amount of fluid between the pleural and visceral membranes of lung which acts as a lubricant during the expansion and contraction of respiration. Ruth had an abnormal accumulation of fluid in this fine space, called pleural effusion. Inflammation of the membrane causes stabbing pain, restriction of normal respiration and intermittent spasm of the chest wall.

Unable to draw a full breath, Ruth winced.

“Kokyu,” I said, and Ruth nodded her head. She drew a deep breath and emitted a guttural kiai, simultaneously extending her arms in the peculiar corkscrew motion we call kokyu (breath). She breathed more deeply and emitted another deep cry and her lungs expanded fully. The sound of pleural friction rub had almost disappeared.

We both smiled broadly. Her pain had not gone away, but for a moment she had broken through it.

Later Ruth called me into her room. She wanted to tell me about her trip to Iwama, how inspiring it had been to see the Aiki Shrine and the feeling of solidarity she shared with Aikidoists from around the world who had gathered there. It was a high point in her life she said.

“Do you know Bill Witt Sensei?” she asked.

“Yes, I do.”

“Please tell him I have not been able to continue going to the dojo, but I have never forgotten Aikido, nor have I for-

gotten his devotion and commitment to his students and the art.”

When I saw Witt Sensei in September in Rohnert Park on the occasion of Saito Sensei’s visit, I gave him Ruth’s message.

By the time I saw him the next year, under the cloud of 9/11 and Saito Sensei’s absence, Ruth had passed on.

JOSHUA HAYES



ANNUAL LIST OF DONORS

Over the last year, Aiki Integrated Arts has benefited from the contributions made to the school by many in our dojo community as well as by others who’ve never taken a high-fall in their lives. Contributions come in many forms: some may appear as checks that can be deposited while others may be manifested as artwork.

We’d like to acknowledge all those who have contributed their time, care, and spirit to the dojo over the course of the year 2002. That list consists of all of you who show up and train. Thank you!

In addition, this year we are listing the names of donors who have contributed funds or services over the calendar year 2002. Some contributors have chosen to remain anonymous, and we honor their wish by not including their names below but by saying once again to them and to all of you:

T H A N K Y O U !

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The above list is by no means all inclusive and covers only the year 2002. If your name does not appear and it should, please let me know so that the error can be corrected.

Some notable contributions that occurred at the beginning of 2003 will be acknowledged in the spring edition of the KIAI next year.



TRAINING WITH YUDANSHA AT SEMINARS

Training with yudansha at seminars is a big part of an Aikidoka's training. Both new and old concepts are introduced. If you are aware enough, you get a shot at training with high ranking yudansha and Sensei. Also, it's fun to go to a seminar and then later in the week Sensei or Sempai will teach that same technique or concept in class, and your understanding can grow deeper. In general, going to seminars introduces you to more and more aikido principals, and those principals will only deepen and further your training in the dojo.

I've gone to about 4 or 5 seminars and I can completely see the difference in myself from the first seminar until now. Not just because I'm uchi deshi, but because I like training in the dojo. The more you become comfortable and understand the tenor of seminars, like you do dojo keiko, you can keep up and learn more.

My first seminar, I was scared. I was so happy that other members of the dojo were there to train with me. I was scared that people from other dojos would not accept me or would avoid training with me.

But I've found that training at seminars parallels training in the dojo. People sense when you don't know what you are doing, and they help you out. They point you to where you need to go. They train with you gently and informatively. And as your understanding of seminar training deepens, you start to form goals, just like in your regular training.

As you train, you look around and ask "Who's good? ... Wow, look at that person!" So when the next technique is

introduced, you jump in front of that person and bow in. (Kim Sensei, Leif and JR taught me that trick.)

At the Denver seminar, Leif told me that the right corner next to Hitohiro Sensei was where all the action was. So the next day, I tried to delve into that area as much as I could, and more.

For a few weeks after the Denver Seminar, Kim Sensei played with some of the variations that Hitohiro Saito Sensei had emphasized in Denver. I really appreciated that. The seminar 'introduced' me to the technique. But the continued training in it during the week that followed really let me get a taste of how those variations worked.

This last week Peter Sempai had us go through a progression from Kihon, to a level where as soon as the person touches you, you do the technique, then into ki no nagare. Goto Sensei taught that particularly progression at the Takemusu Association training in Davis on March 15th. Those threads happen all the time in the seminar/dojo aikido world. I think they are really interesting.

Another important thing to do at seminars is to branch out. Train with people you don't know. Learn what they have to offer, and offer as necessary what "you" know to people at seminars.

In Denver I trained with people who didn't even know to stand in hanmi. But also in Denver I trained with two yudansha in particular who threw me around doing morote dori and shomen uchi irimi nage like I was taking highfalls in 2 square feet, without my 'feet' ever leaving the ground. Whack! I can clearly remember their arms clocking me and then they would catch me and I wouldn't fall.

I remember grinning, exhilarated, excited to get a taste of the feel and understanding of how to do irimi nage hard. I have years to go before I can make other people feel that way. But looking into someone's eyes as they give me a fierce, happy grin in answer to a hard throw is a goal in my training. Moments like that happen all the time at the Oakland dojo and at seminars. My point is: the more classes and events you go to, the more chance you get of feeling those moments.

Seminars are special, and important. I'm really looking forward to training at the Tahoe Gasshuku in May. Seminars are the perfect time to bond, train hard and really concentrate for just a weekend on Aikido, Sensei, Sempai, and fellow students.

JONATHAN NAPIER-MORALES

