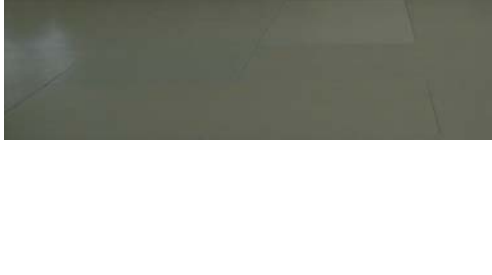


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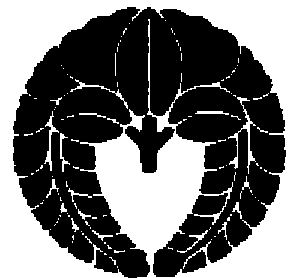
Journal of the Aikido Association of America

July 2003



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Clockwise from top:
 2003 National Instructors' Seminar
 Photo courtesy of Ben Zarit
 Shodan test, Ryoshinkan Dojo
 Photo courtesy of Michele Boge
 AAA/AAI Group after Embukai at the Budokan
 Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff
 2003 National Instructors' Seminar
 Photo courtesy of Ben Zarit

News from Headquarters

Aikido World

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A Message from the Chief

Hello all, it is close to summer here in Chicago, finally! And finally *Aikido World* is back in the running. We appreciate your patience as *AW* has been slow in coming out to you all on the mat. But we now have new editors who are eager and willing to give it their all for the AAA/AAI members.

I would like to take the time to ask all of you to support Ben & Stephanie as they take on this big task. If any of you have stories to tell or pictures to submit, please do so. *AW* will try to get as many of them as possible put into an upcoming publication.

There will also be themes, specific topics, and other areas directly related to our art in each edition. Please feel free to offer your ideas and feelings about the way of life we love so much.

Some of the upcoming issues will cover seminars past and future and also bigger events such as camps or world tours, like the just ended Japan trip.

Any way you look at it, *Aikido World* will hopefully bring you enjoyed reading about the topic we all love to do and breath, AIKIDO!!

So get your pencils (or keyboard) ready and start writing us. We are ready to put in print what you all have to say about the great art of Aikido.

Have a great summer and see you on the mat!

Andy Sato
Chief Instructor ~ AAA/AAI



2003 Instructors' Seminar.

Toyoda Sensei always lived bigger than life, and what he accomplished in such a short time is beyond measure.

He arrived in the United States not speaking English, with only a suitcase and a little money. From there he went on to found national and international Aikido organizations that together number more than 200 dojo worldwide, and lived to see the completion of a new international headquarters training facility in Palatine, Illinois.

As we entered the new millennium, Toyoda Sensei continued to build upon



Fumio Toyoda Shihan

and stress what have become the hallmarks of his instruction: powerful, effective technique, clear instructional methodology, the importance of instructor certification and training, and the spirit of Budo which must inspire and motivate all of our activities.

Toyoda Sensei was determined that we be at the center of the growth of Aikido, supporting and respecting the art's origins in Japan, while at the same time creating our own expression and strong art here where we stand.

Toyoda Sensei left his family and students with a remarkable legacy and with a remarkable dream to carry on. His teaching will have effects for generations to come.

AAA and AAI proudly move forward under the legacy of the man whose dream created them, and has driven them so successfully

Seminars & Events

2003 National Instructors' Seminar

By Greg Null

When I was asked to write this article, I was excited and dumbfounded at the same time. How was I going to express my impressions about my first Instructors' Seminar? Would I talk about the guest instructors and my impressions of their teaching? Would I talk about all of the students from across the country that I'd never trained with before? Would I mention the ceremony that Shaku Joseph Jarmin Sensei held in memory of Toyoda Shihan? Or would I write about the thrill of being thrown by Sato Sensei?

Then it came to me. To sum up my impressions of the seminar in one word – comfort. That might sound weird or stupid at first. It does to me somewhat. But the more I thought about what it is like to train in Chicago, the more I came back to one point: I am comfortable up there. Here is a small town boy from Arkansas traveling up to the “Big City” to train with the best the AAA has to offer and I was completely at ease when I got there.

2003 First Annual East Coast Instructors' Seminar

by Bill King

Well, it has been a long time coming. For years I have thought that there should be additional venues for the Instructors' Seminars. Don't get me wrong; the National Instructors' Seminar in Chicago is fantastic. Every time I have attended, I have come away with much food for thought.... as well as severely chapped lips from the dry air there! I guess that's what happens when you are used to working out 30 feet above sea level, but I digress...

A West Coast and an East Coast Instructors' Seminar had been in the works for quite some time, and in 2003 the First Annual East Coast Instructors' Seminar finally manifested itself in Charleston, West Virginia. Greg Noble Sensei and



2003 Instructors' Seminar

Before the seminar, I didn't really know what to expect. I was told by my sensei, James Jones, that there would be a little bit of everything taught there. And, of course, he was right. Several different instructors taught with different methodologies as well. I found that if different instructors from across the country taught the same techniques, there were definitely subtle differences in the movements. It was interesting to see the emphasis that different teachers placed on their techniques. One thing

West Virginia Aikido took on the task of setting everything up. Personally, I do not know exactly what series of events needs to take place to host an event of this size, but the logistics must be very time consuming and difficult to pull off. And West Virginia Aikido did it beautifully. They had everything set up and running like clockwork. Hats off to West Virginia Aikido!

Everyone slated to go to the Instructors' Seminar from our dojo was excited about attending. Many from our dojo were “first timers” and had heard many tales of the scope and magnitude of an Instructors' Seminar. Excitement and expectations were high, and with that we were off. We drove up from Cape Fear, over the Appalachian Mountains, and landed in West Virginia on the first night of the seminar. And it was, as we had expected, very exciting. The event had already started when we arrived, and

remained the same throughout all of the instructors' technique though – tai sabaki.

That was probably the most profound thing I saw at the 2003 Instructors' seminar in Chicago—tai sabaki. Not that we don't do it every day in class or at every seminar that I have attended, but to me this seminar seemed a little different. We didn't just “do” tai sabaki. Tai sabaki was stressed.

Andy Sato Sensei taught most of the classes at the seminar and this was my eighth seminar under him. But again, to me, it was slightly different than our seminar in Arkansas, Houston, or Atlanta. Sensei talked about the movements through-

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when passing through the door into the matted area, the familiar deep, resonating sound of people hitting the mat in a gymnasium was upon us. We filled out the required paperwork, got dressed and proceeded to the mat.

It was good to see familiar faces, especially Andy Sato Sensei. With a big smile, he invited us onto the mat,

(Continued on page 15)



2003 East Coast Instructors' Seminar. Photo courtesy of Bill King.

AAA/AAI 2003 Japan Trip

Diversity and Solidarity

By Stephen Rehrauer

From May 23rd until June 1st, a group of AAI members from California, the Chicago area, Poland, and Greece had the opportunity to travel to Japan to experience culture, tradition, and technical excellence in Aikido training. We were able to gather with Aikidoka from all over the world to demonstrate Aikido technique at the Budokan; celebrate the 20th anniversary of Igarashi Sensei's dojo in Hashimoto; attend a special training session at Hombu dojo with Moriteru Ueshiba, the current Doshu; attend a number of special training sessions with Hatayama Shihan and Hiroaki Kobayashi; capping the trip off with a weekend camp at a beautiful Aikido resort on Lake Yamana, where we had the opportunity to train with some of the top Shihan in the Aikido world.

From the moment of our arrival, Hatayama Shihan went out of his way to ensure that we were well taken care of, meeting us at the airport, arranging for our transportation to the business hotel where he had pre-arranged rooms for us, helping us to navigate the intricacies of the Tokyo train and subway system, inviting us to participate in his dojo classes, and making himself available for any questions or problems that might arise during our stay.

Among the many memorable points of the week, we would especially highlight the following events:

Saturday the 24th of May was taken up by the "All Japan Aikido Demonstration" (Zen Nihon Aikido Embutai-kai) at the Budokan, at which more than 10,000 people gathered to celebrate the growth of Aikido throughout the world, with 7000 people from over 80 different countries demonstrating over a five hour period. An-

I had a great time in Japan... highlights were the All Japan Aikido Demonstration (an all-day Aikido show), good training at Hatayama Sensei's dojo, a three day side trip to Kyoto, dinner in Nara at a back-alley sake and snacks stand with Japanese businessmen, being caught in a typhoon during an Aikido camp near Mt. Fuji, and a final blissful visit to an onsen (hot springs baths).

I loved the cooperative nature of Japanese society, the interesting Japanese toilets, the efficient public transportation system, the serve-yourself beer-pouring machine, and most of all, the way we all fit right in while training at Hombu Dojo.

I'd always heard how expensive Japan is but found prices comparable with those in America. For a budget Japanese meal, just follow the early morning procession of school children buying their lunch at the 7 Eleven, Family Mart, or other convenience store. Fresh, good things to eat

drew Sato Sensei led the AAI group in a short but impressive demonstration of basic techniques. That evening we met with other Aikido practitioners from around the world, all of them associated with Kobayashi Shihan, for a festive dinner at a fine restaurant in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo.

Sunday the 25th we attended a special training at Hatayama Shihan's dojo, and later in the afternoon caught a train to Hashimoto to join more than 200 other invited guests at the 20th anniversary celebration of the opening of Igarashi Sensei's dojo.

Monday, May 25th, Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba taught us a special class at Hombu dojo, in which he stressed the importance of kihon waza: ryotodori ikkyo, yokomen uchi shihonage, katadori ikkyo, shomen uchi and katatedori irimi-nage and katatedori kotegaeshi. There were more than 80 persons in attendance on a tatami much smaller than that



Hatayama Sensei and Christine Dyer with a picture of Mt. Fuji. A typhoon hid the real mountain from view. Photo courtesy of Christine Dyer.

are available there; the USA should emulate this. Nine months of Japanese language study made me feel comfortable wherever I went. I highly recommend it!

Christine Dyer is yondan at Chushinkan Dojo in Buena Park, California..

which we have at Tenshinkan, and since at Hombu dojo they never engage in group practice, it was quite a challenge to practice well in such tight surroundings. In spite of this, spirits were high, the energy level was incredible, and everyone had an excellent experience; so much so that during the course of the week several of the AAI members would return to take the Doshu's regular 6:30 AM morning class (which required rising much earlier to catch the first morning train into the city). Following the Monday morning session a number of our AAI group attended a special celebratory dinner with the Doshu, and that evening the Toyoda family invited the AAI officers and regional directors to a special dinner in remembrance of Toyoda Sensei.

From Tuesday to Thursday, while Stephen and Mrs. Toyoda attended a series of organizational and business meetings at Hombu dojo and strengthened

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Recollections and Musings

The Four H's

By Dianne Costanzo

From the moment we arrived in Japan, we were always on the go: going to the Budokan, where 7,000 of 10,000 in attendance participated in demonstrating Aikido; traveling to Hombu Dojo and having Doshu Ueshiba teach class; visiting Hatayama Shihan's dojo and Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei's dojo; and attending the 20th anniversary camp at Lake Yamana, nestled at the foothill of Mount Fuji.

There were trains, taxis, cars, buses, one sightseeing day that included a ride on the bullet train, and walking. We walked a lot. We climbed countless stairs in the train stations. We climbed up stairs. We climbed down stairs. And usually, we were toting our gi bags. On average, we walked about four miles a day. Yes, we were constantly in motion.

For the most part, the weather was pleasant, warm, and sunny—although there was that one afternoon when we felt the tremors of an earthquake. I was reading in my hotel room (slightly smaller than the dressing room at Tenshinkan, and yes, that included the bathroom) when I felt myself shaking. At first, I thought that maybe my blood sugar had significantly dropped, but the shaking continued for a few minutes. I looked out of my hotel room window and noticed the building gently swaying. It eventually ceased and that was that.

Then there was the torrential rain we experienced on the first day of training at Lake Yamanaka. After training, I believe Kobayashi Shihan stated at the party that night, "We haven't had a typhoon in May in thirty-eight years. Ha ha ha ha ha."

These brief snippets, these snapshots of our trip, so rich in experience, so textured and fine, lead me to the following observations. No matter what we were doing, whether training, traveling, or sightseeing, I was constantly bumping into a reality I call "the four H's": honor, humility,

hospitality, and humor. Japan is steeped in a code of honor. One of our sightseeing days led us to the shrine of the 47 Ronin, samurai who avenged the death of their lord and then gave themselves up and committed suicide. While the story itself is impressive, what struck me was the number of people who visited this shrine to honor the memory of those who sacrificed themselves for an ideal.



Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei's dojo in Tokorozawa.
Photo courtesy of Brian Weidmann.

This flows into the second "h", humility. Perhaps because the Japanese culture is so communal, there is a great emphasis on what is good for the group as opposed to the rugged individualism often felt in American culture. Within this pronounced humility lies a legitimate kindness, a willingness to give of oneself simply because it is the right thing to do. Such humility is tied into hospitality. No matter where we went, we were greeted warmly and richly. After training at Hatayama Sensei and Kobayashi Sensei's dojos, we were treated

(Continued on page 6)

Culture and Passion

By Laura DeGraff

This May I had the great fortune to be one of the participants in the AAA/AAI Japan trip. For years I had dreamed of visiting Japan. Ever since the beginnings of my Aikido training, I've been interested in the Japanese culture, people, and the country. To have the opportunity to combine my fascination of Japanese culture with my passion for Aikido was a dream. And as the plane touched down at Narita airport on the afternoon of Friday, May 23rd all I could think was, "Wow, I'm really here." I think it was seeing rice paddies that made me realize I really wasn't in America any more. We hopped a bus at the airport and had a chance to get a closer look at the countryside on our trip to the train station in Tokorozawa. Patches of bamboo, beautiful homes, and breathtaking temples laced the scenery and wove a memorable picture of a foreign country. Our fatigue from the 13 hour plane ride followed by a 2 hour bus ride was quickly assuaged as we came closer to our destination at the Tokorozawa train station. A quick trip on the infamous Japan rail system took us to Kumegawa, our home for the coming week.

So many things impressed me on this trip that it is hard to know where to begin and where to end. Ultimately, I was struck by the deep connection between the Japanese culture and our training in Aikido. Japan is

(Continued on page 7)



Shihan at Hombu Dojo. Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff.

Four H's...
(Continued from page 5)

to wonderful feasts filled with food and friendship. Everyone was so welcoming.

And what would this trip be worth if not for humor? We laughed at the earthquake and the typhoon and ourselves. We laughed at the paradoxes we faced daily. For instance, The Japanese are extraordinarily clean, yet the public toilets do not have towels to wipe one's hands (young people give away paper towels/tissue on the streets and in the train stations).

We laughed when we got on the wrong train back to the hotel. We laughed at the fact that no matter where we went, we were guaranteed a long walk, which al-

ways included lots of stairs. We laughed at the size of bathrooms and that the taller among us had to practically keep one foot outside their bathrooms when they used

...the Aikido given to us by our founder, Toyoda Shihan, sparkles with a dynamism and clarity of which I am most proud.

the facility. We laughed at the "No Smoking in Bed" signs in our hotel rooms when we noticed the cigarette burns on the bed linen.

So much of the trip happened so fast, and I know that I will need some time to process my experience. Yet I can say that I am so grateful for having gone and for repre-

senting the Aikido Association of America at the Budokan and at the Anniversary Camp. I saw some wonderful Aikido and I must say that it was very humbling to be in the presence of nine shihan at Lake Yamanaka. At the same time, I can attest to the fact that the Aikido given to us by our founder, Toyoda Shihan, sparkles with a dynamism and clarity of which I am most proud. And I return to the dojo to continue to cultivate the honor, humility, hospitality, and humor in my own training.

Gambatte (Go for It)!

Dianne Costanzo is yondan and an instructor at Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago, Illinois and is Dojo-cho of the Oak Park Dojo in Oak Park, Illinois.

Impressions of Japan

By John Bieszk

The Japan Trip 2003 started as a unique training opportunity for me, as a chance to be part of an Aikido demonstration at the Budokan, to take a class from Doshu M. Ueshiba, and hopefully to go to the dojos of other Shihan and Sensei who had come to AAA seminars in the past. In fact, it was all this, plus a much greater understanding of Japan, its people and culture.

On our arrival at the Narita airport, Hatayama Shihan had traveled there to meet us and help us get to our hotel. Later we met Isao and Teruko Toyoda, who came to greet us. Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei and a number of his students also met us at the bus station.

The first Saturday in Tokyo was the Budokan demonstration, followed by a 20th Anniversary Party for Igarashi Dojo that evening. The class from the Doshu at Hombu Dojo followed on Monday. I am sure others will describe these in detail, so I will talk about other occurrences.

Sightseeing was a big part of the next four days. On Tuesday we traveled to the graves of the 47 Ronin, a lesson in duty and in determination that is still talked about today. We went to a bazaar, an area of many stores where we picked up a few

souvenirs, that was adjacent to a large temple and several surrounding buildings and a tall tower. In a city that was so crowded (the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Area totals more than 27 million inhabitants) and in which land is so valuable, to have such an area for these temples was very surprising to me.

On Wednesday, we went on a tour of Odawara Castle, seeing the building and many articles from the time period when it was inhabited. I remember taking a bullet train there, with the train looking a lot like a jet plane cabin; two plane-like seats on one side and three similar seats on the other. On Thursday, we went to downtown Tokyo to shop and to see the sights. We saw many very modern and large skyscrapers, rivaling any in Chicago, with a lot of spacious land surrounding the buildings. We also went to the Tokyu Hands department store, eight floors of clothes, office supplies, camping equipment, and other items.

We then went to a shopping area with digital cameras, portable CD and DVD players, small MP3 players, and digital TV program recorders that fit in your shirt pocket. Friday, some of us went to Kamakura, a very pretty garden area on the coast that has many small shrines and a very large, approximately 30 foot tall Buddha statue that was made in 1215 and has survived earthquakes and tidal waves.

In the evenings during the week, we traveled to Hatayama Shihan's dojo and to Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei's dojo. Both Hatayama Shihan and Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei threw great parties for us, with plenty of good food and good company. Their generous hospitality and sincere training were much appreciated.

A special training seminar at a country retreat near Mt. Fuji was held on Saturday and Sunday. There were five classes over one and a half days, each running with three different dojos, with nine shihan teaching. Unfortunately, it was so rainy we never did see Mt Fuji while we were at the resort. Monday came quickly, and our group split into several parties to return by different airlines to various parts of the country. The trip was over, but the memories of the training, the people we met and their generosity, and the history and culture we saw, will last a very long time.

John Bieszk is godan, a member of the AAA Midwest Teaching Committee, and Vice President of the Chicago area Hakamakai. He teaches at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine IL, at the Lombard, IL and Wheaton, IL Park Districts, and at the American Tiger Karate Academy in Elk Grove Village, IL.

Culture...

(Continued from page 5)

a country based upon rules, hierarchies and mutual respect. Every society has rules, that is true, but it seemed apparent to me (especially AFTER I returned to Chicago) that in Japan the rules are so much more strictly adhered to than in most places I have been. Clearly, in a country of so many people, survival is contingent upon universal behavior. In my opinion, Aikido is also based upon rules, hierarchies and mutual respect. At the most simple, we have rules for conduct within the dojo—these rules help us to create order and facilitate our survival in training. Hierarchies in Aikido also help us to survive and maintain order. We learn from watching; we recognize appropriate and inappropriate behavior by understanding the hierarchy and learning how to function within it. In Japanese culture, rules and respect are the basis for individual conduct. Without strict rules for conduct, chaos would ensue, creating

To me, Aikido is such a clear reflection of Japanese society and culture that it is hard to miss the connections.

confusion; following rules creates order and ensures survival. At a higher level in Aikido, we have randori practice, “seizing chaos”, trying to create order out of confusion in order to survive.

In Japan, everything is compartmentalized and yet there is an overwhelming amount of awareness that even though everything is separate and discreet, it functions together as a whole. I think that this is ultimately what we are trying to achieve through our training. Walking down the streets of Kumegawa was such a trip! Every store is specific to one product – the sushi shop, the bakery, the optometrist, the noodle shop, the okonomiyaki shop (okonomiyaki is Japanese pizza!!! – and it rocks!), the tempura bar, the appetizer bar, the liquor store, the camera store, the coffee shop, the produce store—each establishment devoted to it’s own product but all of them working together for the survival of the community. These communities bear a striking resemblance to Aikido where we’re all doing our own thing, but ultimately



*Andrew Sato Sensei, Pat Toyoda, Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei and Steven Toyoda at Tokorozowa Dojo.
Photo courtesy of Brian Weidmann.*

working together to create something wonderful. From the business realm to the personal realm; life and everything about it is treated in this compartmentalized fashion.

A fabulous trip to the hot springs after a long weekend of training brought to light this concept as it applied to the smallest unit of the society—the individual. The baths in Japan are unbelievable, but for me it was a challenge to adjust my western mentality to the eastern tradition of bathing nude with total strangers. Thinking back to my first months on the mat, I remember discussions with my teacher about feeling self-conscious. I was told at that point that the only one paying any attention to me and what I was doing was ME. The comment that was made to me at that time was that we are “each the center of our own universe” and that while whatever we are doing may be extremely important to each of us individually, it is not necessarily of any import to the person next to us. And yet, we strive to develop an awareness of that person next to us while maintaining that focus on ourselves and our own universe.

So it was at the baths. The only one paying attention to me was me. Everyone around me was doing their own thing, going from bath to bath being polite

and respectful of each other. What an incredible experience for someone coming from a society where we have learned that the human body, unless it is a reflection of the societal image of beauty, is something to be ashamed of and hidden from view. This learning can so easily be transferred to our training on the mat. We are continually striving to find that point of balance between absolute focus on ourselves and total awareness of what everyone else around us is doing. We so often direct our attention to wondering what others may be thinking of our Aikido—from feelings of inadequacy to outright arrogance—that we lose the capacity to be aware of anything else.

To me, Aikido is such a clear reflection of Japanese society and culture that it is hard to miss the connections. All of these qualities: rules, order, awareness, respect, hierarchies; they work together to make life ultimately easier and happier. These same things work together to make our training more successful. It is so easy to succeed because the rules are made so visible and easy to follow, and once you begin to be aware of these things you will discover how harmonious and happy your training can become.

I am so grateful for my opportunity to be part of this wonderful trip. The memories will last a lifetime and while this was my first visit to Japan, I know that it will not be my last. Having the opportunity to experience Japan gave me a chance to look deeper into my own training and gain a better understanding of what I am striving for.

Laura DeGraff is shodan and a Youth Academy Instructor at Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago, Illinois



*Hatayama Shihan and Laura DeGraff at Sayamadai Dojo.
Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff.*

From Our Members

The Attic Dojo

By Bruce Caughran

It may be surprising to learn that our Aikido family in Oak Park, Illinois practices twice each week beneath the eaves of the home of one of our members.

Dianne Costanzo Sensei founded our group in a suburban athletic club in 2000. Since then, we have grown to about a half dozen for most of our evening classes. Changes in management at the club in October of 2002 led to diminished support of our group and an immediate challenge to our future. Remko, our man from Amsterdam, responded by kindly volunteering his home. We did a collective tenkan and left the club behind us.

It was reminiscent of a Little Rascals episode, where the gang all pitches in to save the town newspaper. "I know kids... let's put on a show!" We all chipped in: Sensei brought the mats, Remko found a weapons rack in Chinatown, Bruce hauled over a shoji screen, Greg hung fabric and secured dry wall, Magda arranged lighting, and Ange swept away dust that might have been as old as the hundred year home. Drafty windows were repaired. Boxes were moved to the basement. Photos of O Sensei and Toyoda Shihan transformed a bare brick pillar into a shomen. A kanji scroll and

an incense burner added to the purposeful atmosphere.

When we were finished, we had a new space that was, in most ways, superior to the old athletic club. The expanse of cushy mat is far better than having rug burns on your nose from the industrial flooring of the gym, which always stank of "Love My Carpet".

There is easily enough room beneath the roof for jo and bokken kata. The steep pitch of the eaves, however, mandates that nage throw uke the length of the room and not the width. Extending zazen becomes important when the walls can appear so suddenly. The winter temperatures have been remarkably mild up-

It was reminiscent of a Little Rascals episode, where the gang all pitches in to save the town newspaper.

stairs, which makes us frankly apprehensive about the summer's heat.

The physical space is not the only advance we have made toward becoming a "real" dojo. Attendance has actually grown since our move. Kyu ranks from seventh to third are represented and we have new members planning to take their first test. We went from one evening per week at the club to two per week



The Oak Park Dojo. Photo courtesy of Remko VanDerKroft

in the attic. Now our time together seems less like a class and more like training. Our group truly does feel like an Aikido family. We often have coffee together at the kitchen table before we begin. We have played ping pong in the basement and we have relaxed in the den after we finished.

The family feeling is even stronger because Magda and Remko's children are often present. Five year old Zosia does most of the warm-ups with us before she leaves the mat. If two and a half year old Filip is still awake, he follows along from the sidelines. A beginner's mind has never been more evident.

Currently, visitors are welcome after they contact Costanzo Sensei at Tenshinkan dojo (773.525.3141) and she lets Magda and Remko know to expect guests. Costanzo Sensei has spoken of eventually outgrowing the attic and making a move to a storefront in the Oak Park area. That move is probably a wise one, as a residential space is ill-suited for long-term growth. The space will be missed, however, if the day comes when we no longer shake the ceiling of the kids' rooms below with thundering breakfalls from the attic. The move has brought us together and the process has taught us a great deal about how to make a dojo and, more importantly, what makes a dojo.

Bruce Caughran is 3rd kyu at the Oak Park Dojo in Oak Park, Illinois.



The Oak Park Dojo. Photo courtesy of Remko VanDerKroft.



This will be an ongoing section with perspectives from instructors and kids who are involved in the youth academy across the country. Please feel free to submit articles and pictures about your experiences. We are looking for games and techniques that really work. Please share your successes!

Hey Dad, Grab My Wrist!

By James Landry

An eight-year-old stands in good hanmi with right hand extended in invitation, "Hey Dad, grab my wrist." Dad walks up, taking his son's invitation in a cross hand grab. Dad is quickly introduced to the mat as son steps in, performing a kokyunage. Father and son exchange grins, the elder's in approval, the child's in glee. As Dad gets up off the mat he is met with the next invitation, this time from Mom.

This scene is played out every Friday night during family class at Onshinkan Dojo. What started out as a coincidence of convenience has turned into a well-attended, high-energy class held Friday night and Saturday morning where youth and adults are encouraged to train together. With a very family-oriented student base, we count among our members nine family groups with some combination of parents and siblings all training in Aikido.

Imagine if you have one adult and two youths training in the same family. This could mean four to six trips to the dojo per week, possibly two trips in a day. By training together, one or two of these trips can be eliminated.

The real benefits go far beyond logistics.

In these classes we emphasize the non-competitive, cooperative aspects of Aikido. Relationship and communication issues can be explored on the mat. The different generations are given a common platform on which to build future discussions. Families have a chance to spend that all-so-important quality time together that we hear so much about.

Good role modeling is an important aspect of any child's development. Our parents are our first role models. When



Illustration courtesy of Jonathan Knipping

we are young, we just figure our parents know everything. We seldom stop to wonder how they came to know everything.

What a great opportunity it is for a child to watch his or her parent struggle with and learn something new, to make mistakes and constructively enter into the

learning process.

As an instructor, the family class may be your biggest challenge. You must not only deal with varying degrees of ability, but also with the physical extremes of pairing an eight-year-old with a forty-year-old, and with vastly different attention spans. You must choose techniques that both can do safely. You must also mix traditional Aikido teaching with activities common to youth and children's classes, although we have found that parents are just big kids on the mat and are happy to join in with the more youth-oriented activities.

If you have families that are members of your dojo, consider setting aside a class for them to train together. If you don't have families training, consider encouraging their participation. There is nothing like the support of a spouse, parent, or child to keep you coming to the dojo on a regular basis.

When we have new students join the dojo, we gather in a circle for introductions. Part of the introduction is to tell why you train or what you get out of the training. The adults always come up with some philosophically important reason for training. The kids cut right through and touch upon the reason we all continue to train: it's fun! Family class reminds us of this important truth.

James Landry is shodan and the assistant instructor at Onshinkan Dojo, Aikido of Northern Indiana in Merrillville, Indiana

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AAA Nationwide

Central Region News

John Bieszk Sensei, AAA Midwest Regional Director

The National Instructor's Seminar at Ryoshinkan Dojo was another excellent opportunity to train and to review and re-affirm Toyoda Sensei's teaching methodology. Approximately 115 people participated, very good attendance considering that the following weekend was the East Coast Instructors' Seminar in Charleston, WV. The West Coast Instructors' Seminar took place earlier in the year.

Recent Events

April 24-27: **National Instructors' Seminar** hosted by Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instructed by AAA Teaching Committee members.

May 18: **2nd Annual Chicago Area Kids Seminar** at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Upcoming Events

July 3-6: **AAA National Summer Camp and Toyoda Sensei Memorial Training**, hosted by Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Aug. 22-24: **Ohio Seminar** hosted by Tetsushinkan Dojo in Holland, OH. Instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Sep. 5-7: **First AAA Women's Only Aikido Seminar** hosted by Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instruction by senior AAA female instructors.

Sep. 26-28: **Toyoda Center Seminar** hosted by Yushinkan Dojo in Wyoming, MI. Instruction by Ed Germanov Sensei, Chief Instructor Bulgarian Aikido Association.

Southern Region News

Ned Danieleley Sensei, AAA Southern Regional Director

There have been two seminars in the Southern Region so far this year. The first was in March, when Horikoshi Sensei from the Horikoshi Dojos in Japan instructed in Atlanta. Horikoshi Sensei is affiliated with the Kobayashi Dojos, so the instruction was familiar, but Horikoshi Sensei brought his own interpretation and special energy to the weekend. Paul Domanski and his group did their usual excellent job of putting on the seminar.

Then in May, Sato Sensei taught an East Coast Instructors' Seminar in Charleston, WV. Attendance was excellent and Sato Sensei spent a lot of time on how to teach techniques from the proper tai sabaki. Greg Noble hosted what turned out to be a large group and did an excellent job of getting us organized.

Upcoming events include the AAA Summer Camp in Atlanta with Sato Sensei in July and an AAA Teaching Committee seminar in September.

Recent Events

Mar. 28-30: **Guest Instructor Seminar** hosted by Kyushinkan in Atlanta, GA. Instructed by Horikoshi Sensei.

Upcoming Events

Jul. 24-27: **Southern Region Camp** at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, Atlanta, GA. Instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

AAA Nationwide

Western Region News

James Nakayama Shihandai, AAA Western Regional Director

Greetings from the Western Region.

Our year started off with a visit from Sato Sensei, January 30 - February 2, at Chushinkan Dojo in Buena Park, CA, for our annual Western Regional Instructors' Seminar. Sato Sensei later visited Roger Mosconi of the Aiki Institute of Spokane in April.

Coming up on June 27-29, we are having our annual Toyoda Sensei Memorial Seminar at Chushinkan Dojo. This will be instructed by Western Region Teaching Committee members James Nakayama, Fred Phillips, Martin Katz, and Ken Mac Beth Sensei. On July 18 - 20, in Helena, MT, Roque Wardell of Mountain Spirit Aikido is sponsoring a seminar instructed by James Nakayama Sensei, Western Regional Director.

Our California Western States Camp will be on October 2-5, instructed by AAA Chief Instructor, Andrew Sato Sensei, and Edward Germanov Sensei, AAI Bulgaria Chief Instructor, at Rossmoor, CA. Later during the month on October 24-26, Ron Sims Sensei is celebrating Jyushinkan Dojo's 10th anniversary in Logan, UT.

We've added a couple of new dojo here in the West. Mr. Pete Swingle, Dojo-cho of Ai-KO Dojo in Fresno, and friend of Roque Wardell and Roger Mosconi, has joined our AAA family. Joseph Vaughan and Eric Wegner of University of Idaho have also decided to affiliate their Aikido class with the AAA.

Recent Events

Jan. 30-Feb. 2: **West Coast Instructors' Seminar** hosted by Chushinkan Dojo, Buena Park, CA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Apr. 11-13: **Spokane Seminar** hosted by Aiki Institute of Spokane in Spokane, WA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Upcoming Events

Jun. 27-29: **Toyoda Sensei Memorial Seminar** hosted by Chushinkan Dojo, Buena Park, CA. Instruction by Western Region Teaching Committee Members.

Jul. 18-20: **Montana Seminar** hosted by Mountain Spirit Aikido, Helena, MT. Instruction by James Nakayama Sensei, AAA Western Regional Director.

Oct. 2-5: **Western States Camp** hosted by Aikido of Rossmoor, Seal Beach, CA. Instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai and Ed Germanov Sensei, Chief Instructor Bulgarian Aikido Association.

Oct. 24-26: **Jyushinkan Dojo 10th Anniversary** hosted by Jyushinkan Dojo in Logan, UT.

Eastern Regional News

Glen Matsuda Sensei, AAA Eastern Regional Director

Recent Events

May 1-4: **East Coast Instructors' Seminar** hosted by Kushinkan Dojo in Charleston, WV. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Jun. 27-29: **Worcester Seminar** hosted by Zenshinkan Dojo in Worcester, MA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

Upcoming Events

Sep. 25-28: **Eastern Region Camp** held at the Green Meadow Waldorf School, Chestnut Hill, NY. Instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai and Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei, Kobayashi Dojos.

Dan Rank Promotions

Shodan

Alan Adams, Yushinkan, Wyoming, MI
Angel Angelov, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria
Julie Auman, Seishinkan, Dickinson, TX
Charles Chapman, Zenshinkan, Worcester, MA
James Clark, Yushinkan, Wyoming, MI
Dimitrina Dimitrova, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Ivan Dinev, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria
Jon Forrest, Chushinkan, Buena Park, CA
Sharrod Graham, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Robert Hoff, Jikishinkan, Brooklyn, NY
James Landry, Onshinkan, Merrillville, IN
David Mata, Yushinkan, Wyoming, MI
Teresa McGee, Ryushinkan, San Diego, CA
Alan Okada, Ryushinkan, San Diego, CA
Craig Pearlman, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Piyatisaa Perera, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria
Paul Revenko-Jones, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Jason Stone, Seishinkan, Dickinson, TX
Daniel Vanhee, Kyushinkan, Roswell, GA
Jason Ward, Seishinkan, Dickinson, TX
Roque Wardell, Mountain Spirit Aikikai, Fort Harrison, MT

Nidan

Robert Caron, Zenshinkan, Worcester, MA
Gene Edwards, Gyokushinkan, Fort Smith, AR
Chrisitan Gonzales, Kenshinkan, Vista, CA
Luke Maranto, Kyushinkan, Roswell, GA
Rajeev Prasad, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Don Ruffin, Chushinkan, Buena Park, CA
Stamatis Sahinopoulos, Fukushinkan, Piraeus, Greece
Maciej Slota, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Tim Spies, Ryoshinkan, Palatine, IL

Sandan

Laurie Erickson, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Maria Germanova, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria
Glenn Iwaoka, Ryoshinkan, Palatine, IL
Kevin Kelleher, Aikido of Escondido, Escondido, CA
Iavor Mihailov, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria
David Rose, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL
Plamen Tsolov, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria

Yondan

Christine Dyer, Chushinkan, Buena Park, CA
Veera Kasicharenavat, Ganshinkan, Salt Lake City, UT



Dimitrina Dimitrova shodan test. Photo courtesy of Michele Boge



Glenn Iwaoka sandan test. Photo courtesy of Michele Boge



Aikido Association of America Regional Camps Instruction by Andrew Sato Shihandai AAA/AAI Chief Instructor

July 3-6: National Summer Camp, Palatine, IL. Ryoshinkan Dojo

Jul. 24-27: Southern Region Camp, Atlanta, GA. Atlanta Area School for the Deaf

Sep. 25-28: Eastern Region Camp, Chestnut Hill, NY. Green Meadow Waldorf School
Also instructing, Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei, Kobayashi Dojos.

Oct. 2-5: Western States Camp, Seal Beach, CA. Aikido of Rossmoor.

Also instructing, Ed Germanov Sensei, Chief Instructor Bulgarian Aikido Association.

Diversity...

(Continued from page 4)

ties, the rest of us combined cultural exposure, tourism and training. Some of our group decided to take a side trip to Kyoto and its surrounding areas, while Sato Sensei took matters in hand and led the rest of us on a tour of some of the most important and interesting historical sights in and around Tokyo. We were able to visit the famous tomb of the 47 Ronin Samurai warriors, tour the Ginza district, visit one of the most important traditional temples in Tokyo, travel to Odawara on the bullet train to see Odawara castle, and travel to Kamakura to see the giant Buddha and visit Hasedera, one of the most famous temples in Japan dedicated to Hase Kannon. On Friday, Stephen Toyoda led us on a tour of the electronics district, the downtown area, and Takashiyama square.

On Saturday morning, the 31st of May, we traveled by bus to Lake Yamanaka to

Overall the trip was intense, and a wonderful experience of the diversity and the solidarity that exists in the Aikido world.

begin a two day special camp, joining with nearly 200 other Aikidoda from around the world to train with such renowned teachers as Kobayashi, Arai, Kubo, Sugawara, Miyamoto, Hatayama, Inaba, and Igarashi Senseis. In spite of the fact that we experienced the first May typhoon in Japan in over thirty years, and it poured rain for the entire two days, spirits were not dampened. There were three hours of training on Saturday afternoon and two hours on Sunday morning. The camp lodge had three enormous tatami areas where classes were being held simultaneously, and participants were able to choose which Sensei they wanted to train with for each one hour session.

The return trip on Sunday afternoon was equally memorable as we stopped at a resort famous for its hot mineral springs, where we were able to rest and recover with traditional “furo” hot baths and a wonderful “all you can eat and drink” dinner.



AAA/AAI Group with Hatayama Shihan at Sayamadai Dojo. Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff.

Overall the trip was intense, and a wonderful experience of the diversity and the solidarity that exists in the Aikido world. In spite of the fact that so many people came from differing national and cultural backgrounds, language groups and styles of Aikido practice, we were all able to join together in celebrating what we have in common: our love for Aikido and our dedication to both living and teaching the “Way of Harmony.”

Having the opportunity to train side by side with other groups and in another country also brought home to us the richness of what we ourselves have. Our average dojo in the USA is two to three times larger than even a large dojo in Japan. Having seen this, we begin to realize the enormity of Toyoda Sensei’s vision in building Ryoshinkan, the headquarters dojo for AAI. There is nothing like it in Japan, where 80 to 100 people regularly train in a space a quarter of its size. This luxury of space of course gives us the advantage of being able to extend fully in our technique when we practice. As a result, the quality of our instruction and practice can stand up to anything we saw during these twelve days.

At both the Budokan demonstration at the beginning of our trip, and the closing demonstration at the end of the Lake Yamanaka camp, the AAI distinguished itself through the quality and strength of its technique. Sato Sensei’s demonstration at camp was formidable, and brought home to me clearly the tremendous legacy that

Toyoda Sensei left us. It also impressed upon me the importance of our working hard and constantly to ensure that we do not lose what he gave us.

Japan is a country that has been able to combine extremely modern technology with very traditional values in its everyday way of living, and this was also clearly the case in our experience of Aikido as it is practiced there. Aikido is a modern martial art, but very deeply rooted in a long and fascinating cultural history. At the Budokan we were able to see Shihan 80 years old and older demonstrating Aikido technique, and while their technical ability and expertise may not have been what they were 20 or 30 years earlier, they were received and appreci-

In spite of the sore muscles, the pain in the knees, the muscular fatigue, we were able to experience a profound inner joy as we threw and were thrown.

ated with tremendous respect for what they had contributed and continue to contribute to the development of the art of Aikido throughout the world. And they were admired for the fact that they were still training and willing to share with others what they had learned from a lifetime of practice. Rather than just being appreciated for what they were able to produce now, as is so often the case in the West, they were appreciated for who

(Continued on page 16)

*National Seminar...
(Continued from page 3)*

out the lesson. It was really broken down in a way that I hadn't been exposed to before—not to that degree.

Martin Katz Sensei taught another session as well. What I noticed most from his session was again movement. His body movement was far different that my own and different from most I had studied with. He seemed to glide instead of step. I think you could have balanced a book on top of his head during his demonstration. Again, his tai sabaki was very deliberate. Not just a movement needed in order to get to a technique.

I also enjoyed the memorial that Shaku Joseph Jarmin Sensei held for Fumio Toyoda Shihan. That was my first experience with that sort of ceremony and it was nice for me to see the reverence that everyone had for Sensei. I'd never had the privilege to study under Toyoda Shihan. I had just started and didn't have the



2003 Instructors' Seminar

rank to go to his last Instructors' seminar. But it was shown to me by Sato Sensei and the other instructors that tai sabaki was extremely important to him and something that he continually stressed in his teaching.

I wonder if people understand how important it is to continue that remembrance, especially for those of us who did not have the opportunity to study under Sensei. My instructor has definitely continued that with his students and it has helped transition those of us that never had the opportunity.

I think that is why there was so much of a focus on tai sabaki during the seminar. Put simply, that is what Toyoda Shihan wanted. Not to simply do techniques on attackers. But to flow from movement to movement with such ease that it does not matter when and where the attack comes from. I have learned that if one has strong tai sabaki, the techniques will take care of themselves.



2003 Instructor's Seminar

In two years I've trained in Fort Smith, Arkansas; Houston, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Memphis, Tennessee; Chicago, Illinois; and Brooklyn, New York. There is one constant regardless; the people welcome me wherever I go. Aikido is often times the only thing we have in common, but that is enough; I can walk onto a mat and suddenly I am with friends. Whether it's Justin and Leslie in Chicago, or David and Amy in Houston, or any of the hundreds of

people that I've trained with, the camaraderie is there—because of the training that we all go through.

The Instructors' Seminar was no different. If anything, it was even better in that regard. I was mistakenly assuming that I would be "brushed aside" or pushed to the back of the line somewhat since I was only a second kyu and not yudansha. Never once did I feel that way. Everyone, from California to North Carolina, was nothing but nice to everyone they trained with.

James Jones Sensei has always told me that Aikido brings people together. It could not have been shown better than at the 2003 Instructors' Seminar in Chicago. Throughout the seminar, I was reminded of those words: *Aikido brings people together.*

Greg Null is 2nd kyu at Gyokushinkan Dojo in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

SEND US YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS!!!!

We are searching for great Aikido-related photographs to use on the AAA web site and in AAA literature. We will give you credit. Please send us your favorite photos, identifying as best you can the date, event, instructors, technique, people in the picture, photographer's name, etc. We will accept either black/white or color, and either regular photos or digital images. Make sure you enclose your name and return address if you want originals returned to you.

We are especially looking for pictures of Toyoda Shihan and other AAA and AAI instructors, artistic photos, and photos showing clear Aikido technique or unique aspects of Aikido.

Please send them attention of Aikido World, 1016 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, IL 60657, or by email to AikidoAmer@aol.com.



welcomed us, and told us to get started. And with that, we did.

It took me a few minutes to get my “sea legs” after such a long drive. My mind was still reeling from the onslaught of exit signs, billboards, and the endless white dashed line in the middle of the road. After a few techniques, I settled

“If you don’t have basic technique, you don’t have anything.”

—Andy Sato Sensei

right in and started to absorb what was being demonstrated. As always, Andy Sato Sensei brought a relaxed feeling to training that was filled with lots of smiles, jokes, and laughter.

The full gamut of technique was discussed and demonstrated, including some basic weapons work with the jo and bokken. Members of the teaching committee were slated to instruct these sessions, and did so with typical enthusiasm and expertise.

I think all will agree that weapons work never seems to be long enough, especially in the paired techniques of the bokken. It is not just the technique you learn, it is the total sensory experience that makes weapons work at the Instructors' Seminar something special—the almost overwhelming clacking sound of wood against wood during practice, the vibration of the weapon when struck by another, along with the familiar tingle in your hands that results from intense contact. It is a sound and feeling that is almost one of the signatures of Aikido.

Empty hand technique was highly stressed. If my memory serves me correctly, Andy Sato Sensei said, “If you don’t have basic technique, you don’t have anything.” The basic technique of a given art is the framework of Aikido. As a living art, Aikido changes and grows

with time. Basic techniques undergo a metamorphosis, ever changing in their effectiveness by the slight manipulation of a stance, the placement of a hand, a step, a slide, or a slight adjustment in direction of movement. The basic technique, kihon waza, is the gateway to the application of applied technique, “oyo waza”. Andy Sato Sensei was very clear on this fact. He made sure the point was driven in, that the way to teach Aikido is to teach basic body movement, then the basic techniques of a given art. Only then can a student truly understand oyo waza.

Oyo waza was demonstrated and practiced at great length. One particular technique was chosen and was literally beaten to death, and then another, and it too was beaten to death. It seemed every incarnation of oyo waza of a particular art was explored.



East Coast Instructors' Seminar. Photo courtesy of Bill King.

When the seminar reached this part of our training, everyone was experiencing the full magnitude of the art. Advanced pins, throws and projections were used. Everyone was “showing the love” to each other. (*showing the love: putting on a really GOOD pin for an energetic pat on the leg or mat, throwing with a little extra energy, extending uke into a really energetic roll or fall... this is what “showing the love” means at Kure Beach Aikido.*) It was very exciting. It was very educational.

As the Instructors' Seminar's name implies, it is an event for instructors about

how to instruct. As is typical, there is a short lecture at the beginning of a session, demonstration and explanation of technique, followed by practical application through training. We were also given many examples of proper ki testing procedures, keeping in mind the intricacies of ki testing and the mindfulness of gender, guidance during testing, and projection of intent when testing stance and balance. We were all instructed on what to do when, why you do it, and how to do it correctly. It was very informative and much needed.

The direction that the Aikido Association of America has been heading in the past few years has been towards tai sabaki toshu, basic body movement in training. From there it has been a process of building to the basic technique “kihon waza” of a given art, then finally the application of basic technique, “oyo waza”. Basic body movement **IS** the key.

When technique is not working for you on the mat, I have learned from this and previous Instructors' Seminars, and also from practical instruction of students, that everyone must go back to basic body movement. Ask yourself: Do you have proper distance from uke? Are you extending ki and floating on a well-balanced center? Are you using unbendable arm? Are you relaxed?

If not, go back to the beginning. Go back to your basics and all of your technique will be sound. You will not have to work the technique, the technique will just work. Instructors' Seminars give us all a chance to learn new ways of sharing Aikido with each other and with new students. It brings us back to the beginning. Learning, as well as teaching technique in this manner is the second greatest gift given to all of us by Toyoda Sensei. His greatest gift is bringing Aikido to us in the first place.

Bill King is nidan and Assistant Instructor at Kure Beach Aikido in Kure Beach, North Carolina

Diversity...

(Continued from page 13)

they are and for what they had been able to give to others.

It was rewarding to see the mutual respect that permeated our training time, whether at Hombu dojo, at local dojos or at the camp at Lake Yamanaka. Rarely if ever was rank or age an issue. Never did we hear anyone criticizing any of the older practitioners or teachers as being too weak or not "up to par" in their technique. Nor did we hear any comments about whether one country's group had stronger technique than another. It simply was not about who was better than whom, or who deserved more attention, or even who got to teach. There was a very clear spirit and understanding that we were there together to train and to learn, and that everyone had something to contribute, to share and to learn.

While our training was strenuous and vigorous, there was the realization that the physical training had a much deeper purpose which led us beyond the physical into the realm of the personal and spiritual. In spite of the sore muscles, the pain in the knees, the muscular fatigue, we

were able to experience a profound inner joy as we threw and were thrown.

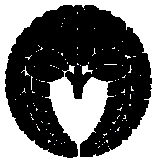
As we experienced the kindness and hospitality of Kobayashi and Hatayama Sensei, who went out of their way to make us feel welcome and at ease, we saw clearly an example of the deeper benefits of training. These, like our own teacher Toyoda Sensei, are men who are decent and kind after a lifetime of Aikido training. Others feel safe and happy in their company. They have been able to draw people from all over the world together into a unified organization that crosses and supersedes cultural and personal borders.

As we participated in training and watched extremely talented Aikidoka with already superb physical technique humbly listen to others in an attempt to make their technique even better, we were reminded of another thing that Toyoda Sensei used to talk about so often – Shugyo. Aikido training is not so much about physical technique as it is about our intentionality, and who we become through the physical practice. No matter how perfect or powerful one's physical prowess is, there is always still something more to learn. It isn't enough to know how to do

the technique; one must do them with the proper spirit and intention and for the right purpose. And while the physical waxes and wanes with time, there is no limitation to the deeper growth potential of the human spirit to which our physical training opens us.

I left Japan exhausted, but deeply satisfied and renewed in spirit, and with a greater appreciation for both the strength and quality of our own Aikido Association International, and the great advantages for training we have in comparison to Aikidoka in other parts of the world. This brought home to me quite tangibly the importance of working harder to share with others the gift that we have been given by promoting the growth of AAA and AAI, and by doing all that is necessary to ensure the continued existence of our Ryoshinkan training center. More importantly, it has reminded me not to take for granted what we have, and to make more regular use of the training opportunities and facilities available to us. This alone made the trip more than worthwhile.

Stephen Rehrauer is godan in Rome, and is the AAI European Director.



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