

Aikido WORLD

Journal of the Aikido Association of America



April 2004



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News from Headquarters

Aikido World

is published quarterly by the Aikido Association of America and distributed to member dojo worldwide. Aikido World welcomes photos, short articles, book or movie reviews, as well as news related to Aikido and the martial arts. Submissions and advertising inquiries may be directed to:

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Cover Photo from Western States Instructor's Seminar, courtesy of Laura DeGraff

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A Message from the Chief

Hello all. The cold grip of winter is slowly losing its hold and we are all anticipating the spring thaw and the warmth it will bring. I don't say this just for those of us in the regions that experience this icy winter. Although this is a physical manifestation I write about, it is still a very real thing for all persons, no matter what region of the AAA/AAI you are living in.

This anticipation of warmth is not just in the physical, it is about renewal and hope. And it is ever present in all of us even in our darkest days. It is what we all look for as we walk our path in life, that feeling of brightness brought on by one's sense of hope for the better. Better days, better health, better work, better etc., it is all the same, the desire to feel and be better.

How does this relate to Aikido, you ask? It is through the form and practice that allows us to open our mind and heart so that we relate through simple honesty to all that we connect with.

Toyoda Sensei would talk about the need for a clear and honest attack as uke and as the nage to give back in the same manner. To hold back or to be less than committed in the Aikido we do would diminish this opportunity for one to feel that sense of betterment. From there our training extends this understanding into our daily interactions with all that we come into contact with.

Without commitment, our training is not fully realized and the intent to capture that feeling will be lost. We will do ourselves a disservice not only on the mat, but also in our daily lives. What we give will return in the same.

The great feeling created by our practice is part of what brings us to the training of Aikido. And the further along we train, the more that feeling and understanding stays with us as we go about our day-to-day experiences. That is what brings out the better nature in all of us. The many insights of compassion, concern, respect, and support to our fellow beings makes us be and want to be better in all ways of life.

Aikido is a martial art, but it is just that martial sense in the art that gives us a form of education to guide us to betterment of character and civility in all of our social interactions. Aikido, the martial art, guides us to transcend our small view of life and make everything we attempt to be better not only for own self but for all we touch. Through the knowledge that this martial art can bring injury and even death gives us a profound respect for life and the responsibility to care for it. The Aikido forms of nage and uke give us the tools to face adversity with fearlessness and the knowledge that we can make a difference. Constant training makes us better able to come back ready for more no matter how tough things get, just like taking the falls as uke. There are no expectations other than to go at it again and again until we get it right.

In these days of great global concern and tension we need a root even more to tie us to our humanity and heart. I encourage you all to look for the bright warm days ahead with renewed spirit in your training and for the better days as we know can be.

See you soon as we train for our life and, better still, for each other.

Andy Sato
Chief Instructor ~ AAA/AAI



Photo courtesy of Greg Null

Dear Friends in Aikido,

As we complete our first year as co-editors of *Aikido World*, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the support of the members of both the AAA and the AAI. We have received wonderful seminar reviews, articles, photos, and creative submissions from fellow Aikidoka from all over the world. It has made our job as editors a truly exciting and enjoyable one. Please continue to send us your thoughts and ideas about Aikido, and about AW. This is your newsletter and we want to make sure that it is representative of our community.

This summer marks the 30th anniversary of the arrival of Toyoda Shi-han in the United States. The July issue will focus on remembrances, stories, anecdotes, pictures, and the lessons of Toyoda Shi-han, so please send submissions to us for this special issue. We would like to hear from as many people as possible, no matter if your thoughts fill a few paragraphs or a few pages. Please contribute anything that reflects your personal experience with Toyoda Shi-han or with his dynamic Aikido.

Please also keep in mind that we always welcome submissions of any length. We look forward to hearing your thoughts about Aikido. Arigato!

Ben and Stephanie



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 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.

The location of the test committee is dictated by the relative locations of the kamiza and the entrance to the dojo. The test committee should be positioned so that it is next to the kamiza and farthest from, yet facing, the main entrance. The entire dojo can thus be monitored and people entering the dojo can be seen. If someone comes in late or needs to cross the mat, the test committee can pause at a convenient time and direct the person to enter.

(Continued on page 7)

Procedure for Conducting Promotion Tests

By Glen Matsuda

Promotion tests are some of the most memorable events that take place in our training. They are also some of the most nerve-wracking.

Promotion tests are an opportunity for each student to demonstrate his or her understanding of Aikido. Because of the effort that goes into preparing for a test, the level of proficiency increases dramatically for each student.

Conducting the test is a major responsibility of the dojo cho. There are many elements that go into conducting tests and they generally fall into two major categories:

Conducting the test

- Organizing the test
- Starting the test
- Conducting the test
- Deciding test results
- Ending the test

Controlling the kiai

- Calling ukes
- Calling techniques
- Handling etiquette

Presented here are guidelines for conducting an effective test. These are only

guidelines. Like the test itself, *how* the test is conducted is an expression of the person conducting it.

Conducting the Test Organizing the Test

Have the test committee organized before the test begins. This includes having the paperwork ready and selecting the committee.

For dan tests, the committee is headed by chief instructor Andrew Sato or a teaching committee member approved by him and is made up of sandan or higher. There should be an odd number so that tie votes are avoided. The senior teaching committee member should choose the committee.

For kyu tests, select the committee members. Generally, the test committee will be made up of the senior yudansha. For larger dojos, there can be an ongoing test committee. This can be made up of senior yudansha with two to three year terms. This allows consistency over time, and allows rotation of yudansha, giving everyone a chance to be on the committee.

Starting the Test

Have everyone line up, with the test committee line on one side and the remaining yudansha on the opposite side. Any yudansha that are testing are not to sit on the test committee or with the other yudansha. They are to sit with the kyu ranks.

Aikido International Foundation

The Year in Review and a Look Forward

By Tim Spies

As we close out another year, it is often helpful to take a look back in order to help plan the move forward. The AIF has had a great year and 2004 looks to be even better. But before we hit on last year, let's take a look at what the AIF is, our mission, and our goals.

The AIF is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational organization. Toyoda Sensei's vision for the AIF was for this organization to be THE premier coordinating body for the development and practice of Aikido worldwide—a bold statement and a huge undertaking to be sure. But maybe if we look at this in another way it becomes an easier task, like...bringing Aikido to the community. How do we accomplish such a task? By doing what Sensei would have done...break it down into manageable pieces and attack them one step at a time. During late 2002 and early 2003, the AIF Board of directors put together several points that would define what the AIF would do. The three majors areas of concern are: purpose, services, and funding.

Purpose:

- ◆ To strengthen and preserve the successful transmission of Aikido to future generations
- ◆ To become the premier coordinating body for the development and practice of Aikido worldwide
- ◆ To promote Aikido to Aikido-related and non-related individuals, groups, and organizations in a non-discriminatory manner
- ◆ To promote the principles of Aikido to local, national, and international communities

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What's Happening in the AIF

By Tim Spies

We are closing in on the end of the first quarter of the year and the AIF has been very busy. The following is a snapshot of what we have been doing and what is coming up.

On March 5, Glenn Iwaoka Sensei, sandan, Tim Spies Sensei, nidan and Paul Tjeres, third kyu taught Aikido to the entire freshman class at Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois. The event was part of the school's mental health week. Each of the eight gym periods came in for a one hour class in Aikido and conflict resolution. During the entire day, some 800 kids were exposed to Aikido. This is the fourth time that the AIF has been involved with this program. In addition, we also work with the senior class during their violence prevention week.

Starting on April 6, the AIF will have a permanent program at the school for the kids who are interested in learning more. Aikido is now a club sport at the school with classes being held 2 days per week after school.

Another high school near Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine has expressed some interest in the same type of programs and we are actively pursuing the lead. At the AIF we believe that there is a tremendous opportunity to bring Aikido to our youth in the community by working with the schools.

The AIF has been sponsoring the instruction at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Illinois for the last year. The Lake Forest College Aikido Club has now officially affiliated with the AAA. Congratulations to the club members.

Recently, the AIF donated three 6-week introductory class gift certificates to two organizations in the area. Two of the gift certificates went to Quest Academy in Palatine as part of their annual fund raising auction. The Quest Academy is a Montessori school for gifted children. The third went to the Robinson Family Clinic of Rolling Meadows, Illinois as part of their family appreciation weekend. Each year the Robinson Family Clinic raffles off items to raise money for local charities. The AIF is proud to be associated with these two fine organizations.

The AIF is always looking to put on demonstrations. It is our belief that the more we are out there the more we can do. In the past we have put on demos at local corporations, village picnic events, movie theatres and shopping malls. We try to have at least one demonstration per month. If you have any connections or ideas, please contact us at aikidoaif@aol.com

We have some major events coming up in the next few months. In June the AIF will be holding a rummage sale at Ryoshinkan Dojo. Please hold on to your spring cleaning "trash" for it may be someone else's "treasure." In August the AIF will sponsor an outdoor training weekend at the Rose Retreat in Grand Junction, Michigan. Details will be forthcoming and you can check out the retreat at www.roseretreat.com In November, Frank Gallo Sensei will come to Ryoshinkan dojo for a seminar in tactical disarmament. Gallo Sensei was here last year and this seminar has been very popular in the past.

Thank you all for your generous donations last year. We have slowly but surely been able to begin some of the programs that the AIF was created to do. The purpose of the AIF, among other things, is to insure the successful transmission of Aikido. It is not our desire to constantly ask for money but the fact of the matter is that we need it. The transition of the last three years has left us in debt. But the good news is, we are working our way out of it and moving forward. You will see more and more of the AIF!

Tim Spies is nidan and is an instructor at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL, at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, IL and Harper College in Palatine, IL.

Seminars and Events

Western States Instructor's Seminar

By Rachele Reynolds

Often when we think of Aikido, it is the martial art that comes to mind, the techniques, the throws, the pins and their effectiveness. As in all things, there are facets and depths to Aikido that don't often come to mind so readily.

The unexpected gifts that Aikido has brought into the lives of those who choose to open themselves to its possibilities are camaraderie, friendship, a sense of community, a feeling of acceptance, and the joy of discovery, just to name a few.

These were all present at the Western States Instructor's Seminar held at Kenshinkan Dojo in Vista, California this past March 4–7. Led by Andrew Sato Sensei, Chief Instructor of the Aikido Association of America (AAA) with the help of the Western States Teaching Committee, James Nakayama Sensei, Martin Katz Sensei, and Ken MacBeth Sensei.

Aikidoka came from several different states: Arkansas, Utah, Montana, Texas, Oregon, and Illinois just to name a few. Old friends met again on the mat after months, even years, of not training together. Rediscovery and the joy of working out with each other overcame the passage of time. Techniques and the process of learning and re-acquaintance swept barriers aside and it became just about the purity of Aikido once again. Fond moments were shared in the midst of waiting one's turn to practice a technique and many nostalgic stories recalled at the traditional Saturday night dinner.

A particularly interesting highlight of the weekend was the focus on weapons evidenced by the sounds of bokken against bokken, jo against jo, and the strength of particularly loud "kiais" expressed with conviction. Exploration between open hand techniques and their relationship to their weapon counterparts were struggled over and en-



Photos courtesy of Laura DeGraff

joyed by all. It became even more of a noteworthy event with the aid of classic California weather.

The seminar participants brought with them beautiful, sunny, high-80 degree weather, a bit unusual this time of year even for this part of the country. Aikidoka from out of state were quite happy to be treated to sunbathing while practicing kumi tachi and kumi jo outdoors.

While Sato Sensei enjoyed the change in climate, he also stressed the importance of teaching methodology. Students, he mentioned, should be introduced to techniques in such a way that they feel it is within their reach. The practice of tai sabaki and its relationship to complex techniques is a critical tool when teaching. He also introduced the idea of giving students the opportunity to teach weapons, particularly kumi jo and kumi tachi. As many may know, this can be particularly challenging because it must allow for thorough knowledge of both offensive and defensive moves and then the ability to instruct the students and keep them safe. Many kyu ranked participants were afforded the chance to teach

their dan ranked counterparts. This was a great way to retain knowledge of complex weapon on weapon practice and build confidence for everyone. It also made way for a much deeper understanding of the many variables and struggles of teaching and the true meaning of being a student.

Often it is difficult to communicate and explain why many of us are students of this particular martial art and why we are drawn to Aikido. It was also very evident that there was a sense of joyful practice, deep commitment and affection among the participants of the seminar. Toyoda Sensei shared with us the greatest gift of all – he taught all of us his love for Aikido and he inspired us with his incredible spirit. Rest assured, his message is alive and well and his legacy lives on with conviction in everyone who shared in the seminar. A sentiment from O-Sensei expressed over the weekend gives us advice and sums it all up "practice with a sense of pleasurable exhilaration."

Rachele Reynolds is shodan at Chushinkan Dojo in Buena Park, CA.



Kangeiko

By Steven Patterson

The thing that I enjoy most about the winter intensive training in Chicago is that it is not summer in Chicago. Only joking Chicago.

We made the journey, Sensei Noble, Sandy Walker, and myself, in Sensei's wife's posh new mini-van that he somehow talked her into letting us use. I am not sure what arcane deal Sensei had to make to let us travel in luxury, but I thank him and of course his wife, for it.

The city itself seemed to have gotten the flyer and made sure we had plenty of winter. Sato Sensei and Hatayama Shihan made sure we had plenty of intensive training. I can think of no better way to start the year than Kangeiko, being surrounded by friends old and new, and doing the one thing you love to do.

Outside the ground is covered in snow, fresh paper waiting for new legends. Inside you are being shown the potential of your art, and over the course of the event, being shown the potential to move beyond your current physical and mental barriers. All of my respect goes out to all of the people who I trained with over the weekend who had less than a couple of months behind them and made it all the way through.

Looking back, I think that is the best thing about Kangeiko. It is a form of misogi and musha shuygo at the same time. Traveling to improve one's skills,



Photos courtesy of Laura DeGraff, Chris Wall, and Ben Zarit

spiritual rejuvenation, and a physical cleansing. Considering most holiday activities, the second and third are of the utmost importance as they bring focus and set you back on the path.

Even the most dedicated Aikidoka can become stuck in rut throughout the year, and when the holidays hit, a lot of times training takes a back seat. All the stress of our jobs, families, and the holidays in general just builds up and we find that there are just not enough hours in the day. And the time we should be training the most to maintain our mental sanity, and keep away the holiday "ten" we don't. But then again we have to keep the "hall passes" coming for the rest of the year.

Kangeiko brings us back into the realm of our friends and, most importantly, our teachers. And our teachers bring us back to the most important thing we can do: learn and experience Aikido. I have always found that as long as my training is going well it seems that the

rest of my life falls into place. As Sensei says, "Not training for a while is like not brushing your teeth, you just start to feel not right."

In addition to all the wonderful teaching, we were honored to see two excellent exams. Stephen Toyoda tested for shodan and Tim Rohr tested for nidan. Both of these tests were a joy to watch. They showed so much variety, skill, and stamina, they were an inspiration to everyone. Congratulations to both of you.

So, thank you to Sato Sensei and Hatayama Shihan for providing such excellent and inspirational instruction. Thanks to everyone that made the trip and took the time to train. Thanks to all the Chicago students who were such wonderful hosts. I look forward to seeing you all at the next seminar.

Steven Patterson is shodan and an assistant instructor at Kushinkan Dojo in Charleston, WV.

Conducting the Test

This is a matter of calling the test candidates out, calling the ukes, calling the techniques, and announcing the results.

The person in charge of the testing can conduct all of the tests, or the testing can be delegated to other members of the testing committee.

Announce the rank that is being tested. Call each student out. If there are two or more candidates, have them line up in the order called. The first candidate should be closest to the test committee.

The candidates bow to the shomen, then to the test committee and return to facing the shomen. In this position, they answer questions and wait for their ukes.

The order in which portions of the test are given is up to the test committee. Generally, however, the ki tests are done first, then techniques, then weapons, then randori.

When conducting ki testing, call as many testers as needed. Generally, the best ratio is one tester for every two or three candidates. A higher ratio will take too much time.

Designate one person to lead the ki testing. Give all instructions to this lead person and they will direct the other testers. The other testers will need to observe the lead person for signals and directions as to when and where to test.

When it is time for the technical test, call for the basic requirements, then optional techniques. However, for dan tests, a series of warm-up techniques may be called before the main requirements.

When the first uke comes out, the test candidate and the uke both bow to the shomen. Then the test candidate turns, faces the uke, and they bow to each other. When it is time for an uke change, both the test candidate and uke sit down in their original position and bow to each other. When the next uke comes out, the new uke and the test candidate bow to each other.

If there is only one candidate, the uke will sit next to the candidate on the far side of the test committee. Thus, the candidate will be between the uke and the

test committee. If there are multiple test candidates, the ukes will line up behind their respective nages.

In testing for the lower kyu ranks where there may be many candidates, space may become a problem. Have all candidates go through the ki testing together, then have two to four of the candidates stay out on the mat and have the others sit down. Those candidates still out on the mat will complete their techniques and then, when finished, bow out with their ukes to complete their test. Then, from those candidates sitting and waiting, call for another group.

When the test is completed, the test candidate and the last uke(s) line up. All bow to the shomen, the test candidate and uke(s) bow to each other, and then all bow to the test committee.

Because of weapons katas and randori, third kyu tests and higher should be done individually. But if there are a lot of candidates, then group testing can be considered. Black belts must always be tested individually.

Depending on the rank and individual, tests should take 20-30 minutes each. The 4th kyu test, for example, may take 30 minutes because of the demonstration of tai sabaki toshu. The 7th kyu test may only take 15 minutes. Dan tests should run a minimum of 20 minutes.

Deciding Test Results

Have a short break to discuss the results. The members of the test committee should first vote on passing or failing. Then the members can discuss their observations and decisions. The main points of concern should be passed on to the candidate.

For kyu tests, rarely should anyone be failed. The only reason for failing a candidate would be for a disastrous breakdown in some part of their test. For the most part, the dojo cho should know the test results before the test is even held.

For dan tests, a candidate is never failed. They are put on probation for at least 6 months and allowed to retest. Toyoda Shihan never liked the idea of failure. He felt that the concept of failure was too harsh. He wanted to keep the testing pro-

cedure positive and give credit for attempting the test. His underlying idea about probation was that the candidate did not quite make it, that there were too many areas of concern in the test.

Ending the Test

Decide when the test results will be announced. For large tests, the results may be written and posted. Otherwise, announce the results. When announcing the results, the rank must be announced, the name of the candidate, and the result. A typical announcement would be: "For the rank of X, (Name), pass."

Many times, the yudansha present will be asked to make comments on the tests. This can range from "Good job" to more detailed comments or suggestions.

The final bow out is conducted and the testing is ended.

Controlling the Kiai

This is the part of conducting tests that can make or break the test. It is the responsibility of the test committee to be aware of the kiai level of the testing session. If the kiai level is too low, the test candidates will not put out a total effort. If the level is too high, people get excited and the potential for injury increases dramatically.

Controlling the kiai involves calling out the test candidate(s), calling for ukes, calling out the required techniques and handling the etiquette.

When speaking, be clear, authoritative, and loud enough to be heard throughout the testing area. This is easy enough in a dojo, but if the test is in a gymnasium, being heard on the other side of the mat may be difficult.

Calling Ukes

There are three choices in how to handle ukes. Some dojos will have an arrangement where the test candidate, prior to the test, chooses the ukes. Then when the candidate comes out for the test, the uke(s) come out at the same time. The advantages are that the candidate will be very comfortable with the uke(s) and that the candidate will be able to create a presentation that will exhibit his or her ind-

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Methuen Seminar

By Sarah Fowler

The temperature was hovering around 0° when a dojo-mate and I arrived after the three-hour trip to the Aikido seminar held in Methuen, Massachusetts. The dojo stood in the corner of a shopping center, its store-front windows facing out onto the parking lot. The light from the dojo's fluorescents pooled on the tar outside, turning the black to a soft gold as we pulled in and parked. Bundled in scarves, hats, and gloves, we stepped from the car, warm from the long trip, into the bitterly cold night, hastily pulling our weapons and bags out of the trunk and running for the dojo door.

I changed quickly, eager to step on the mat and warm up after the long

car ride before class began. I recognized so many people on the mat, seeing faces that I had seen at every seminar I had attended, and realized I was beginning to take for granted would always be there. But I also found a host of new faces. Before the first class began, everyone sat on the mat stretching, the room deathly silent. Soon, John Dore Sensei, the instructor at Methuen

Don't rush through it. This isn't about going fast. It's about coordinating your mind and body.



Photo courtesy of Corey Guilbault

Aikido, the dojo that was hosting the seminar Sato Sensei would be teaching, stepped forward and announced with a smile, "Seminars are for meeting other people in the Aikido community. You guys are so quiet, you're making me nervous." We all chuckled as he continued, "Please turn to someone you don't know and introduce yourself." The mat then filled with the murmur of greetings being exchanged, growing slowly until the room was filled with jovial voices and laughter that did not stop

until the dojo lights were turned off after the last session on Sunday.

Sato Sensei bowed and stepped onto the mat, the room falling absolutely silent except for the slight *woosh* of his hakama as he moved to the center of the mat and sat before the shomen. We sat noiselessly for a moment before he began to bow. We followed.

He started with a demonstration of tai sabaki toshu, then, inviting us to practice, smiled and said, "I want the insides of the windows to steam up." We laughed and stood, each bowing to the first person whose eyes we met. Soon enough, the windows fogged from our efforts, and we

forgot about the frigid world outside before we were clapped to seating.

Sato Sensei demonstrated, his movements deliberate and direct, and yet soft and flowing. He looked as though he were moving in slow motion, while his uke seemed always to be struggling to find themselves in space. With a constant slight smile, he moved effortlessly, as though he were dancing, and yet the dynamic and powerful technique showed itself through his uke.

The mat, a wooden frame housing something like springboard, overlaid with carpet, allowed for the softest falls, making longevity at this seminar almost a non-issue. With each breakfall, there was a slight bounce before settling back to the earth, and every roll felt silent. We did however, become aware of rugburns on the tops of our feet. These, our red badges of courage, were pointed out and compared with smiles and little groans.

There was a definite intent to the instruction at the seminar. The tai sabaki was practiced first, and then, from there Sato Sensei showed techniques in a definite progression, each building on the principles of the one shown before it. The result was the ability to get a basic understanding of the gross movement of a more complicated technique with little confusion. Then one could focus more on the subtleties of timing and taking our partners' balance.

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Seishinkan Seminar

By Brice Biggerstaff

Well, the first Texas AAA seminar of 2004 is over. Over the leap year weekend, Andrew Sato, Rokudan and chief instructor for AAA, came down to Seishinkan Dojo, just south of Houston, Texas for a weekend of firsts. It was Sato Sensei's first visit to the first AAA dojo established in Texas over eleven years ago, our first seminar on a new mat cover, the first time some of the new folks had seen some of the techniques he taught, and the first AAA shodan rank awarded to a NASA astronaut (more on that later).



Photo courtesy of Brice Biggerstaff

Seishinkan Dojo was established in 1992 by Dr. Walter Marker as the first AAA dojo in the state of Texas. Dr. Marker studied under Toyoda Shihan in Chicago before moving to Houston. Currently he holds the rank of 5th dan and is a member of the teaching committee of AAA.

The week before Sato Sensei's seminar at Seishinkan Dojo, a team from Seishinkan had pulled the original mat cover out and laid down a new canvas cover over the gymnastics-quality sub-floor. The old cover had become a patchwork of duct tape repairs and we were certain that a major seminar would destroy it completely! And this definitely qualified as a major seminar—over 40 Aikidoka showed up on Friday night. All told, more than 50 participated over the three days.

We at Seishinkan want to thank everyone for the great turnout. Not only does this encourage others and give lots of opportunities to practice with a wide variety of skill levels and sizes, but it allows the re-

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Arkansas Seminar

By Jason Moreland

It's a new year and once again Gyokushinkan Dojo starts off the year with a seminar. This was our second annual seminar with Andrew Sato Sensei. So far we are two for two with good weather. Last year the seminar started just a few days after a small snowstorm and this year the weather was quite warm for January. Hopefully this trend will continue well into the future!

This year we had a great time. We had a large turnout of Aikidoka from near and far: Chicago, Memphis, Houston, Tulsa, and the Northwest Arkansas area. I would like to thank all of those who traveled for coming.

As usual, Sato Sensei was ready to go when he arrived. Friday got off to a great start. Just seeing so many people on the mat makes the training more intense. Things to remember when training: watch for flying bodies, try to get up before another body lands on top of you, and never turn your back to the mat.

With so many people it becomes very clear that everyone has to be aware of their surroundings at all times. While trying to watch, listen, and learn, it is sometimes easy to get caught up in the action and miss that close call, or not. This seminar I had a visually impaired student with me. Sara was attending her first seminar, (also her first large class with more than six people). Having to make sure she was clear to go at all times made me think of all of the things we take for granted when training (watching for people, keeping our focus towards the

mat). Ukemi warm-ups at the beginning of class made my realizations come to life. For all who helped me with Sara's training at the seminar, thank you! I am sure Sara appreciated not having to spend the whole seminar working with just me.

Weapons training was intense. We had about 40 or so people on the mat doing bokken tai sabaki. I felt the anticipation build as I watched for my partner to start the movement, then blocking the yokomenuchi strike, and waiting for the gap between the groups next to me to open so I could squeeze through to finish the movement. For me this is what makes the seminars so much fun: always having to be aware of where you are. It brings another perspective to my training. We have a large group of ongoing students who regularly attend classes, but usually we have enough room to spread out to train.



Photo courtesy of Greg Null

(Continued on page 17)

for people to jump up and race out to be the uke. Then when someone finally gets out first, there are several people who then have to make their way back to their spots to sit back down. This creates a competitive atmosphere in which people are jumping up and running around trying to be first. An advantage to this type of procedure is that students learn to control their emotions and actions in a highly excited situation.

In the third choice, where the test committee calls the ukes, the kiai is fully controlled. The candidate will not know who to expect, everyone has an equal chance to take ukemi, and the candidate can be fully challenged by varying the ukes from white belt to dan rank. If the candidate becomes tired or flustered, selecting the correct uke can correct the kiai. The advantages to this type of procedure are that the flow of the test is smooth and intentional; all students have to pay attention because they never know when they will be called for ukemi.

When the test committee is calling for ukes, be sure to select the next uke ahead of time, before finishing the ongoing segment. Too much hesitation in selecting the uke breaks the flow of the test, creates uncertainty, and gives the test candidate an opportunity to lose kime. But calling an uke out too quickly can cause the previous uke to rush through bowing and disturb the sharpness of the testing. Immediately after the uke bows out, call for the next uke.

Care needs to be taken when calling ukes of third kyu or lower. They may not have enough experience to handle being in a test. Know the people and their capabilities. And carefully watch the techniques to judge whether or not the uke can handle the situation. If needed, remind the candidate of the uke's ability or change ukes.

Calling Techniques

This part of conducting the test controls the pace of the test. The length of the demonstration of technique is the easiest way to change the kiai of the test. If the demonstration is too short, the candidate is not challenged or may not exhibit the full range of techniques they know. If the demonstration is too long, there is a level of boredom that arises. To maintain a

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Testing Procedures...

(Continued from page 7)

vidual expression of Aikido. The disadvantages are that the candidate will not be challenged with varying uke(s) and the candidate will generally choose those with whom he/she is comfortable.

A second choice is to have ukes volunteer and a third choice is for the test committee to identify and call out all ukes. Having ukes selected beforehand and having ukes volunteer leaves part of the control of the kiai in the hands of the candi-

date. This is good in the sense that the candidate needs to become aware of the overall situation. But if the candidate becomes tired or flustered, the test committee cannot fully control the situation. The number of ukes also becomes limited.

In the second choice, when volunteering, the same ukes will tend to jump out to take ukemi; either they really like taking ukemi or they want to help their friends. Some people may be sitting in a crowded spot where they cannot work their way out onto the mat. There is also a tendency

AAA Nationwide

Central Region News

John Bieszk Sensei, AAA Midwest Regional Director

Kangeiko 2004 was another excellent training opportunity. Hatayama Shihan demonstrated the effectiveness of keeping one's center low and stable with every technique, and showed that nage's lead and extension on uke leads to smooth and powerful technique in both omote and tenkan movements. Sato Sensei demonstrated the fundamentals of tai sabaki, showed the application of tai sabaki in throwing and pinning techniques, and continued with bokken and jo dori using the throws and pins performed in earlier empty-hand techniques. As always, Sato Sensei and Hatayama Sensei gave every participant much to think about and to include in their future training.



Photo from Kangeiko, courtesy of Laura DeGraff

Upcoming Events:

- Apr. 21-25 **National Instructor Seminar**, hosted by Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- May 14-16 **Indiana Seminar**, hosted by Onshinkan Dojo in Merrillville, IN. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Jun. 13 **One Day Weapons Seminar**, hosted by Soshinkan Dojo in Burbank IL. Instructed by John Bieszk Sensei.

Southern Region News

Ned Danieleley Sensei, AAA Southern Regional Director

There's not much to report from the South. Kyushinkan dojo sponsored a seminar in Atlanta, instructed by Horikoshi Sensei March 26-28. The other item of interest is that we've scheduled the AAA Summer Camp for July 29th through August 1st at NCSU in Raleigh, NC. Keep an eye on the AAA web site for more info.

- Jul. 29-Aug. 1 **Southern Region Camp**, held at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC. Details to be provided later.

Help Aikido World Commemorate 30 Years

Do you remember the first time Toyoda Shihan threw you?
Write a paragraph or two describing the experience.

What did Sensei say or do that motivated you in your Aikido?
Tell us about your challenges and successes.

Did Toyoda Shihan make you laugh, cry, learn?
Share your experiences.

Please send us photos, essays, brief thoughts, poetry,
drawings— anything that expresses your
experience with Toyoda Shihan.



Contribute to the July 2004 Issue

AikidoAmer@aol.com

AAA Nationwide

Western Region News **James Nakayama Shihandai, AAA Western Regional Director**

2004 started out with our New Year's workout here at Chushinkan Dojo, Hatsu Geiko, or "first practice." Later in the month, we had our Hakamakai on January 25, where pre-tests were conducted for upcoming dan exams. Pre-testing has been proved time and again to be a sure method of ensuring quality dan exams. This past weekend, March 4-7 at Kenshinkan Dojo in Vista, CA, was our Western Region Instructors' Seminar conducted by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Sensei, and Teaching Committee members Martin Katz, Ken MacBeth, and James Nakayama.

Promoted during the seminar to shodan were Nicha Panich of Aikido of Rossmoor and Siu-Wai Wu of Ryushinkan Dojo. Promoted to nidan were Rafael Martinez of Kenshinkan Dojo, and Steven Wasserman of Aikido of Rossmoor. Anyone planning to attend the West Coast Camp should note that the original date of September 16-19 has been changed to November 11-14.

Upcoming Events:

- Apr. 4 **Southern California Hakamakai**, hosted by Kenshinkan Dojo in Vista, CA.
- Apr. 16-18 **Washington Seminar**, hosted by Aiki Institute of Spokane in Spokane, WA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Jun. 25-27 **Toyoda Sensei Memorial Seminar**, hosted by Chushinkan Dojo in Buena Park, CA. Instructed by Western Region Teaching Committee members
- Nov 11-14 **West Coast Camp**, held at Seal Beach, CA. Details to be provided later

Eastern Regional News **Glen Matsuda Sensei, AAA Eastern Regional Director**

Hakamakai

A Hakamakai meeting was held on Feb. 22, 2004 at Shishinkan Dojo in New York. Kaishinkan, Jikishinkan, Banshinkan, and Zenshinkan dojos sent representatives, along with those from dojos in Pennsylvania: Lower Providence Aikido, Susquehanna Aikido, and Warminster Aikido, and dojos in Connecticut: Aikido of Norwalk and Phoenix Aikido.

There was a 30 minute meeting to review the new test requirements, present dojo reports, and to receive updates on the upcoming Instructor Seminars and Eastern Camp.

Glen Matsuda of Shishinkan Dojo presented a 45 minute session on teaching mae ukemi. Corey Guilbault of Aikido of Norwalk presented a 45 minute session on bokken dori.

There was a 45 minute session to allow people to review dan tests. There were two reviews for shodan, two reviews for nidan and three reviews for sandan.

A total of 29 people attended this Hakamakai meeting. Future meetings will be held in different areas of the Northeast Region.

Upcoming Events:

- May 27-30 **East Coast Instructor Seminar**, hosted by Kushinkan Dojo in Charleston, WV. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Jun. 25-27 **Massachusetts Seminar**, hosted by Zenshinkan Dojo in Worcester, MA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Aug. 5-8 **Eastern Region Camp**, held at Marymount College in Tarrytown, NY. Details to be provided later.

Testing...
(Continued from page 9)

high kiai level, the uke should kiai with each attack. This will force a more dynamic technique.

Keep the test positive. If at all possible, do not allow a test segment to end on a mistake. This drops the kiai level. Change the technique only if the candidate is hopelessly lost. But then give the candidate a technique that will allow them to bring the kiai back. Keep in mind that randori is the most difficult to handle. Do not end the randori if the candidate is stuck or down on the mat. However, if the candidate is totally and completely exhausted, then end the randori. For each technique or randori, look for one positive effort and then end it.

Handling Etiquette

How the candidate behaves, how the ukes move in and out of the testing, returning to the original position—these help control the flow of the test. Remember that testing is just another class. Demanding proper etiquette reinforces the training. Do not be hesitant about making corrections.

- ◆ Be willing to correct all people of all ranks. If the bowing is not done properly, correct it.
- ◆ Be willing to correct the people conducting the ki testing. If they do not know how to perform a certain ki test, instruct them.
- ◆ Be willing to correct the ukes. If they do not attack properly or with enough energy, correct them. If they do not bow

in and out properly, make them sit back down and do it properly.

◆ Be willing to correct people sitting and watching the test. If they are walking on and off the mat without permission or not sitting in seiza or cross-legged, correct them. A useful concept to use here is called ruthless compassion. Be ruthless in enforcing the etiquette. But be compassionate.

There is a tendency for students to remember corrections given during testing. Because of the focus and concentration, corrections penetrate deeper into the student. Also, the other students sitting down and observing the test are more open to seeing and grasping corrections.

Randori

Another decision that the test committee must make is how to deal with emotions that arise during randori. Many times the other students will start to call out encouragement to try to help out the candidate. Common statements are, “turn!” or “keep going!” While being helpful, this can also create more chaos than is necessary.

There once was a test where a lot of calling out was happening, especially from the kyu ranks. Between tests, Toyoda Shihan stopped to lecture about the appropriateness of calling out. He said that just to yell for people to turn or to duck or to throw is not helpful. And he asked the purpose and intention for the yelling, was it to help or was it just to make noise? He indicated that any calling out should be appropriate and that generally it should be done only by dan ranks.

Each dojo cho must decide this matter. While calling out helps to raise and maintain a high kiai level, too much calling can create a chaotic feeling and actually deflate the kiai level.

Conclusion

In the beginning, it will seem that conducting a test is as stressful as taking the test. Be assured that it is much easier and nicer to conduct a test than to take it.

It is not difficult to remember all of the details presented here: be aware, choose the new uke just ahead of the uke change, know the next technique to be requested, and keep the testing positive.

Sometimes the stress level during testing can build. Taking a little longer to choose an uke or to choose the next technique can help release the stress. Appropriate humor can also be used. The test should be challenging, but supportive.

Testing is a dojo event that will express the personality and character of a dojo. Testing will bring cohesiveness to the students, a common experience that will bond them. And because everyone attends, it is a great forum for a dojo cho to pass on his or her beliefs about Aikido training to the dojo at large.

Like our regular training, conducting a test is learned through practice.

Glen Matsuda Shihandai is godan, the Eastern States AAA Representative, and a member of the AAA Teaching Committee. He is the dojo cho at Shishinkan Dojo in Nanuet, NY.



Bokken tai sabaki. Photos courtesy of Greg Null

From Our Members

What Happo Undo Taught Me...this Week

By Heidi Cummins

I'm a new Aikido teacher. Even though I've been holding weekly classes since I was 4th Kyu, I am still new. There is a big difference between holding a class and teaching a class. Now, as a starchy new shodan, I'm finally developing the confidence to talk to my class, to teach them, and to offer ideas on techniques and exercises.

One idea that came to me was a question inspired by another Sensei I had while I was in Ki society. The question was, "How can you use this in daily life?" A great question, it makes those students who are there just for the exercise think a little.

I asked this, one Wednesday morning, about happo undo. I also answered it, as best as I could. My answer was: we are divided individuals. None of us are just what we see. We are parents and children, employees and employers, teachers and students, participants and spectators, providers and selfish individuals. Regardless of whether we choose these roles or are pulled into them, it is important to face each facet of our daily lives and our personalities, completely, fully and 100%. Instead of being pulled apart into eight pieces we must turn, commit and accept what's in front of us. We must do it completely and fully. Otherwise we become confused and disorganized. Nothing gets done by only doing it half way, right?

How many times have we had days where the boss is demanding, the kids are screaming, your best friend dumps on you, and your mother calls to wonder why you never call her any more? You know, days that just seem to pull you apart, that is, if you let them.

That is why it is important in happo undo to turn fully in each of the eight directions. Feet under your hips, shoulders over your hips, arms stretched out as in ikkyo undo, all pointing in the

Similarities Between Aikido and Taiji Revealed

By Jonathan Knipping

I had only been training in Aikido for a few months when a senior student I was practicing with commented that I had "very good ki." I thanked him humbly and was feeling pretty proud of myself when I suddenly realized I had no idea what this meant. I understood the idea of "ki" intellectually, but not physically or experientially. Ki extension seemed easy enough in the context of a simple orenate exercise, but in the application of technique I felt very "hit and miss" and often could not feel the difference between extending ki and "muscling" uke.

When Darren Brooks began training at Tenshinkan dojo, I was amazed at how quickly he was able to grasp techniques, and although I outranked him considerably, it was obvious that he had a thing or two to teach me.

This was the impetus for beginning my study of Taiji with Mr. Brooks at Tenshinkan. When Darren asked me why I was trying Taiji, I told him I wanted to learn how to perceive and extend ki more proficiently and consistently. He said I "already extended ki in my own way," and added I had an "expectation of what I was looking for," and that is why I thought I couldn't perceive it. Darren often talks that way. He said he thought he could help me and so I began to practice with him in conjunction with my continued training in Aikido.

same direction. You cannot turn your body one way while looking over your shoulder towards the next turn. You cannot dance and bob up and down as you turn towards your personal compass points.

Movements must be crisp. This reflects your mind. Even if your mind is not crisp, the movements must be, and your mind will catch up. Nothing reflects this better than when you apply your happo undo to your bokken kata I. The notion of eight swordsmen com-

As the weeks flew by I began to notice some rather striking parallels between the two arts, similarities that Mr. Brooks was already well aware of. Indeed, the basic principles of relax completely, extend ki and keep weight underside, as well as circular and tangential motion, are very central to Taiji practice. I surmised that (among other things) the more than 15 years of Taiji under his belt was what allowed Darren to excel in Aikido as he did.

Now, having trained with Darren for more than a year, I am slowly learning how to be more aware of my own ki, as well as that of uke, and I feel my continued study of Taiji has improved my Aikido considerably. While many martial arts instructors discourage "cross-over" training, arguing that it causes confusion and that mastery of any art takes a lifetime of concentrated and exclusive study, Darren rejects this notion, at least with regard to Aikido and Taiji. His feeling, as I understand it, is that all martial arts are based on certain fundamental physical and spiritual concepts, and are therefore, in essence, the same. Specific movements or techniques are only intended to help us discover and apply these concepts. I believe this is the same idea behind a saying I've heard countless times over the years at Tenshinkan: "the best Aikido has no techniques."

Furthermore, it is my feeling that the parallels between Aikido and Taiji are, in fact, quite complementary. Both are

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ing at you from all sides to be vanquished by your sword alone seems old fashioned, when taken literally. However, because O-Sensei was a genius in kinesiology, he created an exercise that, when you put down your sword, you can still "win" using your mind.

Happo undo teaches us flexibility of mind. It is the physical manifestation of, "the mind moves the body." How often are we called on in our daily lives to suddenly "switch gears," in-

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Happo Undo...

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spiring us or forcing us to turn our attention to the opportunity or crisis at hand?

I am constantly and happily reminded and renewed in the brilliance that is Aikido. All of Aikido is in every aikitaiso, in every technique, and in every bow. We should face our training fully, like the first position in happo undo, turn ourselves completely to learning the aikitaiso as in the second position, and bow to each partner with the sincerity of the third turn. Turn again and improve your ukemi. Face your partner, bow, and cooperate with each other. Devote body mind and spirit to each technique. Listen to the Sensei.

Methuen Seminar...

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There was also a very heavy emphasis on weapons, kumitachi in particular. Beginning on Friday, Sato Sensei introduced two of the six each day, teaching each role step by step, and then allowing us some free practice. The practice of the forms remained careful and good-spirited, each of us testing our limits, but being mindful of the potential danger that the practice posed. This is also true of taijutsu, but I found it a bit more evident with a stick in my hand.

When we had had some time to practice one kata, Sato Sensei, with Bob Caron Sensei of Zenshinkan dojo, would demonstrate it and every kata leading up to it, and tell us to try. By kumitachi five, the steps, tsuki, and pivots were all starting to

Extend positive energy to all you encounter. It's applied happo undo in daily practice!

Ideally we should all come to the mat empty. Unfortunately, there is always unfinished work left behind or some chore hanging over our heads. Sometimes it takes that first breakfall to focus us. Other times it may take the whole class before we realize we've been in a fog. What a waste. The mat needs to be an equal refuge for all of us who train. We should leave our problems at the dojo door; they will still be waiting for us when we're done.

Heidi Cummins is shodan and an instructor at Shinjinkan Dojo in The Woodlands, Texas.

meld a bit in my mind. When we were to practice the first five, I was paired with a friend from my home dojo. We moved up to take our turn with the first round of groups that went up, only to hear Sato Sensei say, "If you're sure of it, come up. If not, watch it a few more times." My dojo-mate and I looked at each other with knowing glances and laughed. We were certainly not "sure of it." But we made our noble effort anyway.

The weapons practice at the seminar included not only the promised "special focus on kumitachi" that the flyers had proclaimed, but a heavy focus on how weapons related to open-handed technique. On Sunday, Sato Sensei examined the relationship of ryokatetori and jo nage. We would do a throw from ryokatetori, then he would show the same



Photo courtesy of Corey Guilbault

throw using the jo. I, having always had trouble with jo nage, found this extremely helpful. The lesson I gleaned was: uke grabbing your wrist, uke grabbing a jo, same-same. It was a connection I had been unable to make previously. And even I got a few almost decent throws with the jo in my hand.

Sato Sensei also had us use our jo to do walking strikes across the mat that looked easy, but made my brain stumble over itself and fall flat when it came time to replicate them. Sato Sensei, seeing several of us just trying to go as fast as we could to get to the other side of the mat said, "Don't rush through it. This isn't about going fast. It's about coordinating your mind and body." I blinked when he said that, and tried to keep it in mind during all of my practice in the following days.

There was a general good feeling at this seminar, even more, perhaps, than others I've been to. I don't think there was any point where someone wasn't laughing. I know that I rarely got up from a fall without a grin. And this spiritedness gave life to our practice, animating our techniques and enlivening our being.

When we bowed out for the final time on Sunday, I bowed very low. I was so grateful for having had an opportunity to practice so many hours, to laugh with so many people, to learn so much, and to simply have had this experience. And there was a slight sadness in having to leave the warmth of the dojo and face the bitter cold of the world again.

Sarah Fowler is 4th kyu at Aikido of Norwalk in Norwalk, CT.



Photo courtesy of Corey Guilbault

Seishinkan...

(Continued from page 8)

newal of friendships with folks that we only get to see at seminars. There were Aikidoka from Arkansas, Austin, Fort Worth, and Houston that I noted and I'm sure that I missed some of the hometowns.

We also want to extend a formal thanks to all the Aikidoka for contributing their ki, sweat (and blood, in a few cases), and bodies in helping break in our new mat cover! Those of you who were there on Friday night noticed that it was softer on Sunday than when we first started beating on it! Or maybe we were just worked so hard by Sato Sensei by then that we couldn't tell.

On Friday night, Sato Sensei emphasized the basics of our Aikido skills, focusing on the details. Balance—keeping nage's and the taking of uke's and tai sabaki movement were emphasized in his instruction of empty hand techniques. This became the watchword of the seminar: to save the "hard" keiko for regular training and use the seminar time to hone those details.

Of course, the smoothness of Sensei's demonstrations made the rough spots of our techniques easy to spot. Watching Sato Sensei demonstrate the techniques, I was struck by the subtle remembrances of earlier seminars at Seishinkan with Toyoda Shihan, the footwork, the raise of an arm, even the sense of humor and warmth that characterized Toyoda Shihan's teaching; so unlike the unapproachable style of some other Aikido notables.

By the end of the night, the new mat had been "bloodied" by a few mat burns and there were several tape-wrapped ankles and toes, but everyone agreed that it was a small price to pay for the "lightness" of the impacts on the new floor. Of course, I use the term "lightness" to refer to only some of the impacts. Some of the new folks who hadn't practiced with James Jones Sensei from Arkansas were seen to jump when he hit the mat with his "patented thunder-slap!" (my term, not



Photo courtesy of Brice Biggerstaff

his!) It was great to see the new folks at their first seminar open up and enjoy themselves, getting into the spirit of Aikido practice, which shares rather than competes.

On Saturday, the weather cooperated with Sato Sensei's wish to teach kumi jo patterns. Because of the turnout for the seminar and the relatively cramped space for that many swinging sticks, we had put some of our traveling demonstration mats out on the back driveway at the dojo and used the old mat cover (one more time!) to cover them.

The weather was cloudy and cool, just right for vigorous practice; and not bright enough that those of us with "shorter" (read little-to-lessening) hair would get sunburns on our heads. Sato Sensei divided the group, sending the 2nd kyu and above outside, keeping the lower ranks inside for basic practice, and performing "shuttle diplomacy" back and forth between the two groups. Inside, the kyu ranks started out with simple jo dori techniques with gentle falls, while outside the falls were koshi-hip throws. Then the kumi jo patterns were done with the upper ranks while the lower ranks practiced basic strikes with jo and bokken.

In the afternoon there were two shodan promotion tests, Russell Thomas and Michael Barratt. Both passed and congratulations to them both (we did notice that after their tests they were breathing very deeply... a tribute to their control we were told... hmmm, I seem to remember being glad I could breathe at *all* after my shodan test). And to return to a note from earlier, Michael Barratt can make a claim to being the first AAA/AAI shodan who is also an active NASA astronaut.

Michael has studied at Seishinkan for many years, holding at the 1st kyu rank for longer than anyone thought was possible without giving up. His duties as an astronaut, astronaut candidate and, for some time before his selection as an astronaut, a flight surgeon

for the astronaut corps have kept him busy. Many times he was out of the country in Russia and other places (he was even out on survival training two weeks before the seminar) to a point where he had a hard time getting himself ready (or at least believing he was ready) to take this next step in his training. I don't know when Mike will get a chance for a mission, but we've told him we're lookin' for hakamas in space! (his reply is that in weightlessness, it might be too easy to see what's *under* a hakama)

In the evening the pace slowed only slightly as dusk fell and more of our practice moved back inside the dojo. After the evening session a group retired to a local waterfront seafood place to regroup and refresh. And just to sit still and not have the room do somersaults for a while.

On Sunday, the weather closed in and began raining, so outside practice was not an option, but by now we were all even better friends than we had been on Friday when we started, so we didn't mind the closer quarters inside. We did, however, register a collective groan when Sato Sensei called up his first uke of the morning and proceeded to demonstrate several

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AIF...

(Continued from page 4)

Services

Provide need based scholarships

- ◆ Provide support for fledgling dojos
- ◆ Publication of newsletter
- ◆ Promote teaching methodologies
- ◆ Support educational programs/lectures
- ◆ Provide training facility for other arts
- ◆ Community service projects

Funding

- ◆ Yearly appeal for individual donations
- ◆ Yearly events
- ◆ Government Grants
- ◆ Corporate funding

In 2003, the AIF made available its first DVD entitled *Aikido by Toyoda*. This DVD is an incredible look at Toyoda Sensei during his early years. The AIF sold nearly 100 copies as not only a fundraiser but as an instructional video as well.

Members of the AIF taught Aikido to the entire freshman and senior classes at a local high school. As part of their violence prevention week and *Say No to*

Drugs program, the school had the AIF come in and teach for an entire day on 3 separate occasions. We not only taught Aikido but conflict resolution skills as well.

The AIF now provides the instruction for a local college Aikido club. The AIF has helped the students get organized, prepare by-laws, and even obtain funding from the college. This club currently has approximately 10-12 students and has submitted its application as an official satellite dojo of the AAA.

The AIF hosted numerous demonstrations at town fairs, coffee shops, shopping malls, and movie theatres. A seminar on tactical disarmament was held in October and was taught by Frank Gallo Sensei. Additionally, the AIF hosted a seminar in November in South Carolina and has donated several 6-week intro classes to various charitable groups in the Chicago area.

The AIF has come a long way since 2001, but we have a long way to go. Our steps are small but they are forward. In 2004 we intend to continue what we have

accomplished in 2003 and to begin solicitation of corporate funding and sponsorship. Our goal is to have the corporations in the area sponsor scholarships for under-privileged kids to the AAA Youth Academy. The AIF will seek to provide Aikido based conflict resolution classes for corporations, will look to more local high schools to take part in other teaching opportunities, and will put on monthly public demonstrations.

While it is true that all of this work took place in the Chicago area, it is also true that it can be done in your region as well. The AIF is not a local foundation...we are international. Our goal is to take this program to your region, your community. But we need your help in doing it. If you have any questions, ideas or comments please e-mail the AIF at AAA-Aikido@aol.com.

Piece by piece and step by step the AIF is bringing Aikido to the community.

Tim Spies is nidan and is an instructor at Ryo-shinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL, at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, IL and Harper College in Palatine, IL.

SEND US YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS!!!!

We are searching for great Aikido-related photographs. Please send us your favorite photos, identifying as best you can the date, event, instructors, technique, people in the picture, photographer's name, etc. Make sure you enclose your name and return address if you want the originals returned to you.

We are especially looking for pictures of Toyoda Shihan, artistic photos, and photos showing clear Aikido technique or unique aspects of our style of Aikido.

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



Seishinkan...

(Continued from page 15)

versions of koshi-hip throws into large breakfalls! On the last day of the seminar? Did I say *warm, friendly, sense of humor*?

Actually, Sato Sensei wanted to work on breakfall *practice*, more so than breakfall throws and, after scaring us with the prospect of "breaking-in" the new mat even "better," went on to work on the fundamentals of breakfalls for both beginners and advanced students. And then after that, he let us rest...by

letting us practice suwari waza. Did I say *rest*? Oh, my knees.

It was a well-rounded seminar, indeed. We finished the session with variations on standing katatori defenses, coming from the ikkyo tai sabaki; much fun and bodies flying everywhere

In the close confines there were some near-misses for uke landings and I saw several midair "saves" by alert nages, but there were no bad collisions and the close quarters just kept everyone on their toes, no mean thing as tired as we were

getting.

It was the classic end to a great seminar; when you feel both physically tired and spiritually filled with that glow that comes from great Aikido practice, laughter at the mistakes you made, determination to do it better, and the comradeship of great folks of similar minds helping each other to sharpen their skills. I do believe that most of us would have come back for another day...well, maybe an afternoon, anyway.

Brice Biggerstaff is nidan and an assistant instructor at Seishinkan Dojo in Dickinson, TX.



Photos courtesy of Greg Null



When Sato Sensei was working with them, he was able to work on their level and have fun too. I was able to see a side of him that I don't normally see. We put out cones across the mat and split into two groups, each with half of the kids and two adults. We lined up in seiza with the kids first, and grabbed hold of the person in front of us. The object was to shikko through the cones as a group working together.

I was not the only one having hand to brain communication errors. It wasn't that the drills were hard to do, it was just more confusing, trying to make the whole body work as one. Everyone seemed to get a hand tangled with the other hand at one point. It started off with shomenuchi, right side, then stepping and switching to left side. It doesn't appear hard until you try. Next we added a low strike to the rear with the stepping shomenuchi strikes. Each time the level went up, the confusion for my hands was increased.

Finally we added a spin to the mix. This required fewer people on the mat. To me this one was the most challenging. It start in left or right hanmi stance with the jo held above the head with both hands, one on each end. Next, step and swing with the hand in the rear. Then, catch with the other hand above the head. The hardest part was swinging the jo and not hitting the person in the head next to you. Watching everyone do all of the different movements was about as confusing as doing them.



After the group I was in made it to the end and back the first two times, all of a sudden on the third trip I felt a lot of resistance from Greg who was behind me. I found it increasingly harder to keep moving forward and the other group was starting to move ahead of us. When I looked behind me to tell Greg to pick up the pace I saw Sato Sensei holding onto Greg's shoulders and pulling back. The look on his face is one I will never forget. Sensei had the biggest smile I have ever seen him have. We lost the third race but the children were having so much fun that no one even realized we never finished. Sensei's ability to teach children, in my opinion, is extraordinary.

Every seminar I attend always leaves an impression. Some impressions seem to remain with me for every waking moment I am on the mat (koshinage on the last day of the seminar). Yet all impressions are lasting. I always want more even when I am tired. The training always seems to go so fast on the mat, especially on that last day. It's too bad it has to end, but there is always the next seminar!

Jason Moreland is 1st kyu and the dojo cho at N.W.A Aikido Dojo in Springdale, AR, a satellite of Gyokushinkan Dojo. He is an assistant instructor at Gyokushinkan Dojo in Fort Smith, AR.

*Arkansas...
(Continued from page 9)*

At a seminar, there are so many people that space becomes somewhat of a premium.

Saturday, during the lunch break, we also had a children's seminar. Sato Sensei taught a handful of students. If you have never seen him with children, you should. In my short time working with children I have discovered the challenges of maintaining order, keeping their attention on me, and focusing on what the class is trying to do. It is probably the hardest thing I have ever done.

On Saturday we did jo techniques. The one that sticks in my mind is one we did that works on hand, jo, and brain coordination. Sometimes, when doing techniques, I feel that I am the only one struggling with it. In this instance I found that

Aikido and Taiji
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highly spiritual arts, and while Aikido deals primarily with partner or group practice, with a smaller section of the practice dedicated to individual training, such as weapons kata, Taiji practice focuses primarily on individual movement in order to develop awareness of one's own body, with somewhat less emphasis on partnered exercises, such as "push hands," and no actual throwing or striking of each other. Darren has remarked more than once that he feels Aikido is what applied Taiji might look like.

The parallels between the two arts were clearly illuminated to the students of Mr. Brooks' Taiji I class at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine-Chicago, in a

demo given by Dianne Costanzo Sensei, yondan, on the 21st of February 2004. Costanzo Sensei was assisted by Mort Smith, Pavel Prikryl, Ben Zarit, and myself.

The demo lasted the better part of an hour and covered such topics as the basic history and philosophy of Aikido as a compassionate martial art, basic principles of leading uke, "taking the mind," the art of ukemi, getting off-line, and maintaining one's own balance. Highlights of the demo for me included full class participation as Costanzo Sensei demonstrated wrist stretching techniques, and a barrage of "what if" questions from the students, such as "what if they're kicking you?" or "what if there are two people attacking at the same time?" to

which Costanzo Sensei's quick reply was always "we have something for that!"

The demo concluded with a beautiful two-man randori demonstration by Costanzo Sensei in extremely tight quarters that included a stunning double-iriminage, followed by an okinaga demonstration with full class participation.

Darren continues to examine and experiment with the similarities between Aikido and Taiji in his Sunday afternoon classes at Tenshinkan, and I continue to reap the benefits on and off the mat. Onegaishimasu!

Jonathan Knipping is 1st kyu and an assistant instructor at Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago, IL

The Lighter Side...



O-Sensei *did* say to practice with fierce joy...
 Photo courtesy of Greg Null



Further proof that folks in California are just cooler.
 Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff

AI-KI-D'OH! #3 THE LONG ROAD AHEAD...

By Jonathan Knipping

