

# Aikido WORLD

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## Inside...

<i>News From Headquarters</i>	2
<i>Regional Camps</i>	3
<i>From Our Members</i>	10
◆ <i>Aikido Relationships</i>	
◆ <i>Training With a Significant Other</i>	
◆ <i>Defining Self-Defense</i>	
◆ <i>AIF Golf Outing</i>	
<i>AAA Nationwide</i>	14
◆ <i>Regional News</i>	
◆ <i>Upcoming Events</i>	
◆ <i>Dan Promotions</i>	
<i>Seminars &amp; Events</i>	17



# News from Headquarters

## **Aikido World**

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Cover Photo from Eastern States Camp, courtesy of Greg Null.

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## **A Message from the Chief**

It is that brisk time of the year again when the “hawk” is out and blowin’ across the flatlands of Chicago and Tenshinkan dojo. Many here are moving faster than normal due to the icy-cold mat and drafts from the door opening and closing with the wind. Aaah, winter is here and we are warm inside!

This type of Chicago weather brings fond memories, both happy and sad. A sign that the year is nearing the end, but with celebration of this year’s experiences and anticipation for the approaching New Year of hope, life, and great Aikido.

At Tenshinkan we start to gear up for the last rank testing of the year followed by the annual Holiday bash after the kyu test. The next Sunday morning after the party we have the dan tests, a real testament of fortitude for those that attended the party the night before and either are testing or taking ukemi at the dan tests.

We also have the annual Etsunengeiko. It is a celebration and reaffirmation of the passing of the old year into the New Year through cleaning of the dojo, Aikido training, and a get together party. Etsunengeiko is an old tradition that allows us to reflect on our achievements and failures of the year and also to find the resolve in developing our selves into better human beings from the opportunity of the New Year.

Throughout this past year we have all faced challenges on personal, local, national, and worldwide levels. Some we have passed through making positive growth or affecting relationships for the better. Some we have avoided or missed the mark due to our shortcomings, fears, and our will to go forward. Whatever the outcome, they should all be viewed as an opportunity for growth and betterment, rather than a source of anxiety or fear. Through our training we can master a way to gain courage and will of spirit that can see us through both the good times and the not so good times. This thing we call training can support us as individuals and as a community at large so that in our hearts we can know what it is to be alone yet connected no matter what life experience we must face.

Each time we train it helps in getting ready for “the one time” we will need it. Most of us think of “the one” as the BIG one, but really as the days and years grow we come to find through our training that it is the everyday ones that we face and pass through that make up what we thought as the big one. Things that we thought were so important we could not live without, or face the responsibility of a commitment, etc. ...

It is our Aikido training that is the big one. Knowing our training will always be there for us makes all the fears and delusions pale against its might. As we face the end of 2003 and the beginning of 2004 I ask you all to think of the many good things that have come from your Aikido training and your dojo families. It is through that experience we find warmth, love, and the ability to offer ourselves to our own relationships personally, professionally, and beyond.

Keep the faith and hit the mat. See you in the New Year!

Andy Sato  
Chief Instructor ~ AAA/AAI



*Photo courtesy of Greg Null.*

# Regional Camps

## Western States Camp

By Frank Olson

A couple of weeks before the Western States Camp in California, my Sensei approached me and said, "Frank, you are going to this camp in October." This came as a big surprise; I hadn't even heard of the camp. So we purchased my tickets to fly out and next thing I knew I was there for the time of my life.

I arrived Friday morning, just in time to catch the tail end of Andrew Sato Sensei's demonstration. The seminar actually started Thursday evening, but I was unable to make it. There were about 80 people registered for the seminar, and that left only enough room to form lines for all of us to practice. One person as nage, per line, and the rest of us lined up



Western States Camp. Photo courtesy of Christine Dyer.

as uke. It almost seemed like cattle lined up for slaughter. But this is something we enjoy, being thrown and tossed around.

Never before have I felt the part of a country bumpkin, completely out of place, knowing only a couple of people there: James Nakayama Sensei and Christine Dyer from when they had come and done seminars up in Logan, Utah. And because they were hosting this event, they threw me to the wolves and told me to "roll with it."

I jumped in a line to be thrown in a couple of techniques that I hadn't witnessed. But after watching everyone around me, I was able to get a rough estimate of what technique everybody was doing. Then it was my turn as nage, and after a couple of corrections from the black belts, we got it worked out.

After a couple of different techniques and Sato Sensei's demonstration ended, we bowed, and Germanov Sensei took over. Germanov Sensei continued along with the theme that Sato Sensei started. We started with yokomenuchi strikes and different defenses to them. This moved into yokomenuchi strikes with a jo. After a couple of these techniques, we moved into jo dori. These were fun techniques, and great to learn. I just wish I could remember them correctly. But isn't that what practice is for?

Lunch came and went like a whirlwind, and we were back on the mat again where we continued with the themes, this time with the tanto. Germanov Sensei showed us some variations on this technique that made you want to throw that tanto away from you faster than you could think, otherwise you might have found yourself lying on the ground trying to recover from being knocked out. These were very effective techniques. After a few of these techniques Sato Sensei took over. From here he took us into shomenuchi attacks and later into jo techniques.

By this time, I had started to introduce myself to get to know some of the people I was trusting my joints to. Some of these were yudansha and others not, it didn't matter much at all. All of them were great people. For no matter who I was working with, I was working with someone with a passion for this art that I truly love. I just can't wait to get back down there to work with them again.

(Continued on page 4)



Western States Camp. Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff

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 im-



Fumio Toyoda Shihan

portance 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.

## Eastern States Camp

By Drew Ames

Awesome instructors, odd techniques, inspirational dan tests, and new exercises for randori and weapons were the core of Saturday's training at the AAA Eastern States Camp. I was only able to attend on Saturday, but the seminar lasted from Thursday evening through Sunday early afternoon.

The morning session started with warm-ups and some brief ukemi practice. Then Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei (6<sup>th</sup> dan, son of Yasuo Kobayashi Shihan) led empty-hand practice, showing a series of techniques from ushiro tekubitori. We started with sokomen iriminage, then shihonage. A break fall seemed most natural from the shihonage, and I did that the first few times, but the mats were pretty hard and I took side falls after the first couple of throws. More on that later. After the shihonage, we did sankyo, and then a henka waza that changed from sankyo to kokyunage. This kokyunage was one that many of us, including the yudansha, hadn't seen before. To do it, take sankyo to the point where uke's one hand is on the mat and the other is extended and ready for the take down, but instead of taking it down, lift it up so that uke looks like he's ready for kaiten nage, but with nage in front of uke. Then, nage goes in the direction of the down arm, and uke goes in the direction of the up arm, but under it. (I guess you had to be there).

We did another technique, one whose name I don't know, where after the sankyo, with uke's hand on the mat, nage steps in, grabs uke's gi from behind, and then turns tenkan. Uke ends up back to back with nage, but with his back arched and a nice choke from his gi. Nage can then throw uke into a back fall, or lower uke and keep the choke.

Throughout the empty hand practice, Kobayashi Sensei repeatedly pointed out that when the right hand is leading uke's balance, the left hand is relaxed. When the left hand takes over, the right hand

relaxes. I'm not sure if he intended these instructions to be a general principle, or if they were simply appropriate for the techniques we were doing. At my home dojo, we often practice with both hands being involved the whole time. I'm sure I'm missing something because what we did at the seminar really didn't feel too different from what I learn at home.

The second part of the morning session, also led by Kobayashi Sensei, involved some exercises with the bokken. We started with shomen uchi with right foot forward. Then we did the same cut with our left foot forward. Next was cutting fore and aft with a zengo undo movement. Then stepping tenkan with the cut at the end of the movement. We ended with a movement a lot like the kaeshi-giri we do at my home dojo; the left and right feet would alternate being forward during the cut.

Then we put it all together with paired practice. My partner for these exercises was Sato Sensei. We started with a simple kaeshi-giri practice. After a few minutes of that, we then did the same thing, but with low (gedan) strikes — as if striking for the knee. Then we did two low strikes followed by two regular strikes. Then we did the same thing, but added a step in, tsuba to tsuba, tenkan, and gedan strike, followed by another gedan strike, two regular strikes and the step in maneuver, etc. This particular pattern was repeated without break. We took a short break following these exercises. I was a bit disappointed that we stopped the bokken exercises after what seemed like so short a time. On the other hand, I have a new series of exercises to practice.

As an aside, I spoke with Fred Little during the break. I'd read a lot of Fred's posts at the Aikido Journal bulletin board, and got to train with him at the seminar with Ellis Amdur in January. Fred is one of those guys who really knows a heck of a lot. We talked a little bit about the weapons exercises and aiki

*(Continued on page 5)*

*Western States...*

*(Continued from page 3)*



*Western States Camp. Photo courtesy of Christine Dyer.*

We bowed out for the evening for a little dinner, rest, relaxation, and ibuprofen. When I woke the next morning I found that I had muscles screaming at me that I never imagined existed.

Saturday morning began with some much needed warm-ups. Then we were at it, following Germanov Sensei and then Sato Sensei through some techniques. This day flew for me. There are a few things that stick out above all others. The friendships that I made became more cemented, and I was able to watch a couple of dan tests. This was my first time ever watching a dan test.

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*I think Sato Sensei just looked at me and thought "I'm throwing a moron."*

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During the dan tests I've never felt such a dichotomy of feelings in myself. One feeling of "I want to be out there!! I can do it!!" the other "I'm not ready yet. There is still so much to learn!" Honestly, I was amazed at the three dan tests that were done. They all gave it everything they had: heart, mind, soul, and body. When they came off the mat you could just feel their weariness. But there was something else there hiding under that, something more subtle, a feeling of accomplishment, a type of pride. A "Yeah, I've done it!" type of feeling. Everyone around me was cheering them on, if not vocally, with our hearts. It was also fantastic to watch their uke revving at the starting line, itching to go out there and let the testers be able to blend with everything that they gave them.

That day ended with some techniques from Germanov Sensei. He called them non-Aikido techniques; they were more grappling techniques than anything. These were

*(Continued on page 7)*



*Eastern States Camp. Photos courtesy of Greg Null.*

*Eastern States Camp...  
(Continued from page 4)*

ken in general. Fred's take on things was that if we're expecting to learn how to sword fight with aiki ken, then we're mistaken, but if we look at the sword and jo exercises as ways of training maai and body movement, then we can learn quite a lot. Fred indicated that he studied basic Aikido sword work for ten years before moving on to something else, and he feels the time was well-spent.

Sato Sensei taught the rest of the morning session after the break. We worked on, in order: ryotetori tenshinage, ryotetori kokyunage (pivot throw), then ryotekatori

kokyunage (once with pivot throws and once with the hand-in-the-face-irimi type of throw). At this point, things got really interesting. For our next exercise, we had four uke line up and attack (with ryotekatori) a single nage in rapid succession; nage was supposed to throw the first three with pivot throws and the final uke with the irimi-type throw. The next exercise was similar, but now nage could apply the irimi to any uke, not just the fourth one. This was the beginning of a series of exercises to help prepare us for randori.

Sato Sensei cut the morning session short at this point for dan testing (though how short, we didn't know because the clock in the gymnasium was stopped at 10:40). The dan tests were simply awesome. Two women, Chrissa Pedersen from Aikido of Broomall, Pennsylvania, and Aimee Bel

from Zenshinkan Dojo in Worcester, Massachusetts tested for nidan. Mark Dorfman, the dojo cho of Aikido of Broomall, Pennsylvania tested for yondan. I was truly impressed and humbled by the skill I saw during the tests, and inspired to try to achieve that level of proficiency. My wife was particularly impressed to see the randori in which both women, who are rather petite, successfully handled five big guys attacking them.

The three dan tests took around an hour to complete, and I was sitting cross-legged on the rather hard mats that whole time. This naturally led to my feet going numb and tingly — it happens to me during sitting meditation at my home dojo too. The difference is that at home, after I get up and walk around a bit, the feeling comes back into my feet. At the seminar, my feet stayed numb and tingly. I had obviously pinched the nerves in my lower legs (a discussion with my doctor on Sunday confirmed my diagnosis.) Most of the feeling was back into my feet by Monday night. I think the biggest cause was that my calves would hit the mat during rolls—possibly because I

*(Continued on page 6)*



Eastern States Camp. Photos courtesy of Greg Null.



Eastern States Camp...  
(Continued from page 5)

wasn't tucking my back leg in far enough. The repeated impacts from the falls probably lead to the tissue in my lower legs becoming inflamed a bit. The constant pressure from sitting aggravated the condition, and the inflamed tissue pinched the nerves.

Of course I was a little frustrated. My numb and tingly feet made it difficult to train, and additional rolls started to really hurt my feet. On the plus side, my other injuries offered me no trouble during the entire five hours I trained. Most of the ukemi I did that day consisted of forward rolls — they felt pretty smooth except for my back leg. I guess I need to work on them some more. Not knowing what was going on with my feet, and hoping that they would get better, I continued to train for an hour and a half after lunch. I'm glad I did.

Sato Sensei picked up where he left off prior to lunch. As a refresher, we again did the exercise with four uke. Then we did an exercise with two lines of three uke with each uke attacking one after the other from alternating lines. As before, the attack was ryotekatori from all uke. Following that exercise, we had three lines of two uke attacking one after an-

other. The key with this exercise was for nage to really move and for the uke closest to him to attack. I felt I did a good job moving during this exercise.

The last pre-randori exercise we did was called monster randori. It is similar to a slow motion randori exercise we do at my home dojo, except that about eight uke started out completely surrounding nage, and simply walked toward him with arms extended. We looked like zombies and a few people even made groaning noises. It was a fun exercise that was not meant to be directly analogous to randori, but nevertheless gave nage a chance to be perceptive and to avoid multiple attackers.

Throughout these exercises, Sato Sensei made the point that randori is about letting go. Literally, this means that we cannot afford to get caught up with one attacker and/or continue to give him our attention to watch our beautiful throw. Instead, we need to be ready for the next attacker and able to adapt, blend, and

accommodate his attack. He stated that this is analogous to life where things just aren't going our way. In response, we have to let go of what we think should happen, and adapt to what is actually happening.

We mudansha each got a chance at full speed randori with two black belt attackers. I felt I did pretty well when it was my turn. I initially did a good job of avoiding the attackers, but then one of them told me I should start throwing, so I

(Continued on page 9)



**Anatomy of a Fall:**

*AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai throws Aimee Bel at the Eastern States Camp. Photo courtesy of Greg Null.*

*Western States...*

*(Continued from page 4)*

not for the faint hearted. But none of us shirked it. We all jumped in to this new style, if not for the learning experience, then for the torture we knew we were putting ourselves into. These techniques showed me how much I actually have to trust my training partners. And if I apply too much energy or pressure to what I am doing, I can have terrible consequences for those actions.

Saturday night everyone went out to eat, relax, recuperate, and have some enjoyment. That was fun. I was able to sit with Sato Sensei and get to know him a little better, for which I am glad. It's great to know who the head of the Aikido Association of America is, and how he treats those around him. But because I got to sit with him there were dire consequences the next morning.

Speaking of which, when Sunday morning came around, most of us were feeling the workout that we had done over the past several days. For some that extended from Thursday night. Sato Sensei started off the morning session with katatetori variations. This is where the consequence came into play. During his demonstration he looked at me and called out for his uke, "Frank!"

Several thoughts quickly flashed through my mind, "Who, me? I think you have the wrong Frank," and, "Move you fool!" So I jumped up to be thrown around by Sato Sensei. He first started off with the technique that we had just done. Then he changed into a different throw, and somewhere in there my feet decided to tangle themselves together into a knot. This resulted in me bouncing on my behind for a couple



*Western States Camp. Photos courtesy of Laura DeGraff*

of feet. Not a graceful move for me. All I could really do was laugh at myself and get up there again for one more try. I think Sato Sensei just looked at me and thought "I'm throwing a moron."

But he threw me a couple of more times, which was an experience all by itself.

Germanov Sensei stepped in after a short break and gave us all a rest. He sat down with some paper and ink. While speaking through an interpreter, he explained what he was doing and why. He explained that he felt calligraphy was very important because it showed how centered the mind was. It showed how relaxed or tense you were, and only when you were relaxed could you be able to make a work of art.

I am very grateful that Sims Sensei approached me and told me that I was going to California for this seminar. Even though I only knew a few people out there, I was able to make more friends and overcome



some bit of shyness that I have. I was able to watch a couple of dan tests, which lit anew the fire in me to practice more and more, to really learn those techniques, and to learn them properly. I learned that I can make myself a fool in front of everyone, and it's alright...I think. I learned that you really have to center yourself and relax in order to create a work of art, to be able to do your techniques not only powerfully, but beautifully. My experience out in California was fantastic and I can't wait to return and do it again. I just hope that all of you can join in the fun too.

*Frank Olson is 3rd kyu at Jyushinkan Dojo in Logan, Utah.*

## Friendship Without Borders

By Daniel Nedelchev

From 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2003, the combined Aikido seminar of the Bulgarian Aikido Association was conducted in Sofia, Bulgaria, led by Andy Sato Sensei. The seminar consisted of two parts, the instructor's and the common seminar, where guests from Greece, Poland, Italy, and Slovenia took part.

The main emphasis was put on kihon waza and ki tests from all examination programs during the instructor's seminar. Sato Sensei highlighted the importance of the kihon waza as a basis for the future development of every Aikidoka independently of his or her level and rank. The common seminar consisted of common classes, advanced, and beginners classes, where different techniques were demonstrated as well as weapon techniques. After the classes on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, kyu tests were conducted and after the classes on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, dan tests were conducted.

I was always astonished how pleasant is this feeling of intimacy between the people from different dojo, even from different countries. Probably this is one of the magic things of Aikido – to draw people together independently of their countries or ages. The essence of the instructor's seminar makes this feeling grow and at the same time makes you think of one point – will you be able to give the people your knowledge in an appropriate way, will you be able to fire this spark to practice Aikido as your teachers have done for you and continue to do this?



Bulgarian Instructors and Winter Seminars. Photo courtesy of Matija Grabner.



Bulgarian Instructors and Winter Seminars. Photo courtesy of Matija Grabner.

## Winter Seminar in Tendokan Dojo

By Ivayla Ivanova

From 5<sup>th</sup> till 9<sup>th</sup> November this year in Tendokan Dojo, Sofia was held a seminar under the instruction of Sato Sensei. The event consisted of two parts, Instructors' seminar on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and the winter seminar for the rest of the days.

The previous instructors' seminar took part five years ago, so it was highly expected event. The main theme of this one was "ki exercises testing." Sato Sensei explained about the responsibilities of teaching, stating that along with darkening the color of the belts, the bigger responsibilities we carry are towards those who are starting now. After that Sato Sensei explained the proper moment for testing, points where we should push,

The responsibility of the teacher is very big, indeed. Everybody has at least one example in his life where the badly presented subject makes you never come back to it and probably never understand a good thing, which will remain hidden for you. Sato Sensei during the instructor's seminar put attention on this responsibility of the teacher.

Finishing the last class, Sato Sensei gave a high evaluation for the level of the Bulgarian Aikido Association as one of the best organizations within the International Aikido Association. He mentioned the big contribution of Germanov Sensei as a follower of many years and personal student of Toyoda Shihan for the devel-

where the "unbendable arm" test is appropriate. He stressed the point that the person performing the test is always capable to find a point where he or she can destroy the balance of the person who is being tested. But this is not what we are trying to do. A test is for extending energy and that is what has to be learned by the person who is tested.

Part of our training consisted of our attempts to explain to each other how some exercises are performed. It was valuable in the meaning of exchanging ideas and seeing different ways to explain things.

In the evening of the second day we practiced tai sabaki with bokken. We organized three pairs in the centre of the mat with one counting. It was interesting to see how others behave as examiners.

*(Continued on page 9)*

opment of Bulgarian Aikido and for the dissemination of the idea and the style of Toyoda Shihan.

Aikido really is a unique martial art, where the absence of the competitive element creates a special relationship between its fans. The force of the non-attack and the feeling that the trainees are not enemies to each other creates a real friendship without borders all over the world. Maybe that's why all of us impatiently are waiting for the next meeting on the mat.

*Daniel Nedelchev is 2nd kyu at Tendokan Dojo in Sofia, Bulgaria. He is the web master for the Bulgarian Aikido Association.*



*Bulgarian Instructors and Winter Seminars. Photo courtesy of Matija Grabner.*

*Tendokan Dojo...*

*(Continued from page 8)*

Sato Sensei closed the instructors' seminar with some words about the teaching methodology of Toyoda Sensei and that we are following it and passing it on.

On 7<sup>th</sup> November, the annual winter seminar started. Sato Sensei started showing the basics with techniques from katadori. They were not quite as we saw them before. We again learned even the fundamental things in a slightly new way.

Next, Sato Sensei emphasized our preparedness. We were supposed to take a roll after being pushed from behind and after

mae ukemi we turn towards the one who pushed us. The point was we always have to be ready to face following attack. Sato Sensei drew our attention to concentrate on the "attacker" while we are still rolling.

In the evening we had very interesting work with bokken. Both uke and tori were armed. Strikes were yokomen and gyako yokomen. Moving back and forth we practiced different ways of entering and cutting or throwing. All this was then also practiced in techniques with empty hand.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November, we started with ryote dori. This time Sato Sensei showed two techniques simultaneously. Training for advanced students was dedicated on shomenuchi. First we started to work with empty hand and made a few very pleasant techniques including koshinage. Then to make it more thrilling shomenuchi was performed with jo. In the evening was some more bokken training.

The last day consisted of two more training sessions. Sato Sensei put "the cherry on the top of the ice cream" by



*Bulgarian Instructors and Winter Seminars. Photo courtesy of Matija Grabner.*

techniques in seiza. Fortunately it was not for the whole class.

And then suddenly came the end of five days intensive training. Five days of great fun on and off the mat. But as people say, all good things must come to an end. We will keep our good memories until the next seminar. Looking forward to seeing you there!

*Ivayla Ivanova is shodan and an assistant instructor at Shudokan Dojo in Varna, Bulgaria.*

*Eastern States Camp...*

*(Continued from page 6)*

did, but I quickly got hung up. AAA randori is a little different from what we practice at home. In some ways it's easier, as people aren't generally taken down, but the attacks aren't as full-out as what we do, and that makes things harder in some ways. Still, it was a good experience to feel how our organization expects us to do randori and the exercises leading up to it were fantastic.

After randori, Sato Sensei started teaching some different jo nage techniques. At this point, my feet were still feeling really weird, and the rolls were starting to hurt them, so I bowed out. I decided to miss the last hour and a half of training and start the four-hour drive home a little early.

Here are some general comments: The facilities were outstanding, except for the hard mats. I heard more than a few comments about them as the afternoon wore on. They were grey, tatami-sized mats

that felt a bit rubbery. There were some softer mats at the periphery, and a number of people gravitated to them as the day wore on. This would be a good location to use again for an Eastern States Camp. The gymnasium was in its own building with plenty of locker room space and good ventilation. Lodging was somewhat expensive, but, thankfully, the seminar organizers negotiated a reduced rate at three nearby hotels.

Had I gone for the full seminar, the total cost would have been around \$450, plus travel costs. In contrast, the last seminar I attended was held at the University of Wisconsin's Park Side campus just north of Chicago. Lodging there was on campus in their very nice, air-conditioned dorms. The total cost of that seminar was around \$350, plus travel costs. In all, having to drive or ride for eight fewer hours is probably worth \$100.

Everyone I trained with was exceptionally considerate. Sato Sensei's instructions to us always ended with an admoni-

tion to "go easy" on one another. People took this to heart. As a result, I didn't always feel or perform the best Aikido technique. I often felt strange holes in my partner's technique, or fell without being certain I should have.

In truth, there's often some fudging at seminars. Nobody wants to go full out because the days are long and the chance of getting injured is higher when working with unfamiliar partners. That's okay, seminars are a place to be exposed to some new concepts or to study things in more depth than one usually has the opportunity for during regular training. They're also a place to get some calibration by comparing one's own Aikido to what others in our organization are doing.

Overall, except for the rather bizarre injuries to my legs, the seminar was an overwhelmingly positive experience.

*John (Drew) Ames is 3rd kyu at Susquehanna Aikido in York, PA.*

# From Our Members

## Aikido Relationships

By Robert R. Caron

I was recently married in May of 2003 to a wonderful and beautiful woman, who also happens to be a student of Zenshinkan Dojo. The confounding aspect of the above event is that I happen to be the dojo cho of Zenshinkan Dojo.

My wife, Jennifer Caron, began training in Aikido in 1998 under Edward Haupt Sensei. At that time, I had been training with Haupt Sensei for three years and I had been dating Jen

for two years. Haupt Sensei gave his formal approval of my choice of significant other prior to Jen joining the dojo, but once she joined the dojo, I believe that he

was particularly pleased that I had somehow convinced my girlfriend to become a Zenshinkan member. It really had nothing to do with me whatsoever; Jen fell in love with Haupt Sensei, as we all did, and joined because of the inspiration that he was. I simply made the introduction.

After Haupt Sensei's death in 1999, I began teaching as the primary on-site instructor at the dojo under the supervision of Apodaca Sensei from Newport, Rhode Island and with the guidance of Toyoda Sensei. During that transition, it was easy for Jen to focus on Apodaca Sensei as her instructor and I was just the guy who was communicating the material that Toyoda Sensei, Haupt Sensei, and Apodaca Sensei had presented. When I became the chief instructor of Zenshinkan in 2001, it became more difficult as the only teacher remaining for Jen to look towards was also the same person that she lived with and hoped would soon be her husband.

I believe that the topic of relationship is a very common theme in Aikido training and Aikido principles are very easily applied to relationships of all kinds. Jen and I have worked very hard at our rela-

## Training with a Significant Other

By Jennifer Caron

Training in Aikido with a significant other presents a very unique experience for both partners. There are such joys that go along with being able to train with a partner that are too numerous to count, including the fun you can have doing iriminage with each other on the mat, the luxury of having your significant other be more understanding and accepting of your own personal commit-

ment to Aikido, as well as being able to practice blends in the kitchen before dinner! However, these perks do not come without serious commitment and responsibility, both to each other and to all other students of the art. It is something that takes a lot of work and finesse at times, but if done correctly, can be one of the most enjoyable parts of life.

Because of the way that Aikido is passed on, it is imperative to maintain the proper environment on the mat. People are very attuned to personalities, attitudes, and feelings – especially when in such close contact as we are in Aikido training. The right kind of energy can build people up and make training spectacular! The wrong kind of energy can send people away. It is essential that the energy on the mat is always appropriate. Therefore, Aikido couples must work to ensure that their relationship on the mat is strictly one of good friendship, the same way it is with any other Aikidoka.

tionship over the past 8 years and some of our hardest work has resulted from the difficulties of this potential dual relationship. I do my best to avoid dual relationships as I play many roles in this life, be it as a son, a brother, a counselor, a teacher, a student, a friend, and now a husband. I do my best not to cross those

There is nothing wrong with enjoying training with each other and joking and laughing together on the mat from time to time. In fact, that is what makes it so beautiful! However it becomes something different when more personal feelings shine through from your off-the-mat relationship and other students are able to pick up on that energy, be it happy and flirtatious energy or angry and fighting energy. Both can make people feel uncomfortable and thus, inhibit their own personal training, as well as your own.

My husband, Robert Caron, introduced me to Aikido when we first started dating in 1996. He was kyu-ranked at the time and I found Aikido to be very interesting, yet had no personal desire to start training myself. Over the next two and a half years I watched numerous tests and seminars and enjoyed it tremendously. I even used to anxiously await talking to Bob after he was out of class to hear what Haupt Sensei's lesson was for the night!

However, it was not until 1998 that we came to a point in our relationship where I began questioning the extent of his commitment to the dojo and to his teacher. As much as I liked and respected the people that I had met from the dojo, I couldn't understand why someone with so little spare time to begin with needed to spend every last free second at the dojo, and why he couldn't spend more of that time with me. Trying to be compassionate and understanding of my feelings, he tried and tried to explain it to me. Try as he might, no words could make me understand, until finally

*(Continued on page 13)*

relationships because it confuses people, causes pain and stress, and does no one in the relationship any good. So my students are not my friends and my wife is not my student, however I am very friendly with my students and I hope that I have taught my wife a great deal about Aikido.

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Defining Self-Defense

By Steven Patterson

I am reminded of a couple of scenes from science fiction. First, is a scene of a group of students who have traveled to another world to become sword masters. After their initiation, they are taken to an island to begin their training. The sword master comes before them and gives them a rousing speech as to what they will accomplish in their time with him. Once he has brought them to a fever pitch, he asks them if they are ready to become masters of their art. They give a resounding cry that they are. The teacher replies, "Good. For the next two weeks we study poetry."

Another is a story of a Scotsman studying with a Japanese sword master. One day while training, the master tells him to bring the sword as if he were bringing down the mountain. The Scotsman asks him, "Are we studying swordplay or poetry?"

"Yes," replies the master. These stories are common in martial arts. However, there are times when art imitates life and vice versa.

One of the most common reasons someone begins their study of Aikido, or any martial art for that matter is self-defense—a very valid reason for sure. Whether driven by what is seen on TV, movies, or any other media outlet, the result is the same. Therefore, as instruc-

tors, when a new or potential student comes to ask, we always try to find out what has motivated them to study. More often than not, they have come to learn to defend themselves. One of the most common question a new student has is, "Can I use Aikido to defend myself against an assailant?"

Our answer is always the same, "Yes, in time and with study you will have the skills necessary to defend yourself." Then their training begins. They come with more questions and conceptions about what they are about to do. And like



*AIF Guest Instructors Seminar. Photo courtesy of Ben Zarit.*

the teachers in the story, we welcome them to their new experiences with, "Ok, now the first thing you are going to learn is how to fall down." Life imitates art.

So, what is self-defense? The answer over time becomes more than just dark figures lurking in the shadows. As the student becomes more involved in their

life as an Aikido student, the reasons they started will evolve into something else, something they may not even expect and they may not even notice the shift. First, you have to ask yourself, *how do I define self-defense*. Our friend Webster defines self-defense as "in defense of one's life." Therefore, as in the parables above, our ideas of what a martial art is are shifted, so when we look at what we perceive as a benefit or as an annoyance should be shifted as well.

Could we then not count among the benefits of self-defense better health? Increased awareness? Better flexibility? Better mental concentration? Reduced stress? Physical self-confidence? Discipline? Spirit? And all of the benefits that these things provide. Do these things not help defend one's life and make it better? Will these things not in the long run be beneficial? In addition, yes, over time you will be given the skills necessary to physically defend yourself. However, there is a key to this kind of self-defense that must be kept in mind. No method is fool proof. There is not one martial art that provides "better or faster self-defense methods" over another; any such claim is just marketing. It will depend on the amount of time and dedication that you put into it, how much time you spend on the mat. Nevertheless, it is amazing how dedicated training always seems to let everything else take care of itself.

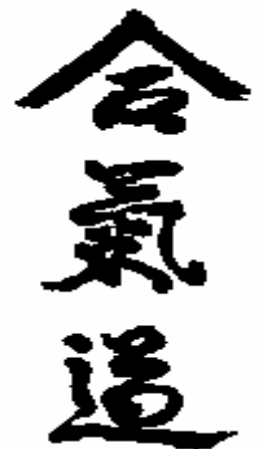
*Steven Patterson is shodan and an assistant instructor at Kushinkan Dojo in Charleston, WV.*

## Aikido Association of America National Instructor Seminar

Instruction by AAA/AAI Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai  
& Members of the National Teaching Committee

April 21-25 Aikido Association of America Headquarters:  
Ryoshinkan Dojo, Palatine, IL

**Please check the web at [www.aaa-aikido.com](http://www.aaa-aikido.com)  
or send e-mail to [aikidoamer@aol.com](mailto:aikidoamer@aol.com) for more information**



*Aikido Relationships...*  
(Continued from page 10)

When I am having a drink with my teacher and laughing about something that friends might discuss, his name is still "Sensei" and he is still my teacher even as we laugh and pour another sake. The difficulty for me has been how I can lead Jen in her training without crossing the line of the teacher-student and husband-wife relationship. I always keep in mind that she is my wife and prior to that my significant other. My struggle has been that when I need to show her something or lead her in some way regarding her Aikido training, I naturally interact with her in a different way than I do my students, because she is my wife.

Emotions are very difficult to differentiate from the point of view of the person experiencing the emotion. Therefore it is essential that we pay close attention to our own emotions and gain an inner awareness of ourselves, our feelings and

how those might manifest themselves both on and off the mat. Jen and I walk a line that is often thinner than air and can be crossed very easily. Jen has been my Aikido partner for years, conveniently being available to review a technique that I am tossing around in my head or giving me a sincere attack because she often truly wishes to kill me. I have valued her as that Aikido partner and I could never express the appreciation I have for her in supporting my life as an Aikido student and instructor. My task is to be her husband and to always keep that in the forefront of my consciousness, and at the same time, share with her everything I know as an Aikido instructor and help her to find her way along that special path that we all share.

I believe the person that really loses out in this situation is Jen. I still have a wife and I have a teacher that I look toward and follow, and I have other students so that I can also be a teacher. Unfortu-

nately for Jen, she does not have a direct teacher with whom she can develop a traditional student-teacher relationship. She looks toward my teacher and other senior instructors in our organization and is able to see them as teachers; however the relationship is not as strong as someone who teaches you on a weekly or daily basis. This situation has certainly put additional strain on my relationship with Jen and we have had our discussions and arguments about this, as well as the usual ones like how to rake the lawn and what color the bedroom walls should be. However, one thing is certain in my mind: that Jen is my wife and the most important thing in my world and if the decision had to be made I'd give up everything, including Aikido, for her and the love that we share. I believe that personal commitment to her is exactly what enables us to keep going.

*Robert Caron is nidan and dojo cho at Zenshinkan Dojo in Worcester, MA.*

## **AIF Holds First Annual Golf Outing**

*By Tim Spies*

On Sunday October 5<sup>th</sup> the Aikido International Foundation held its first ever golf outing at Buffalo Grove Golf Course in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. Nine members of Ryoshinkan Dojo gathered on a beautiful morning to take part in what can only be described as *pseudo golf*.

The day started with a breakfast at a local diner where all the "trash talking" started. After we filled our bellies to the max, we all headed to the course, where the shots proved to be less impressive than the talk.

We divided into three teams and set out over the course. The first tee is always the toughest, as everybody has their eye on you, which explains why the Spies, Kurowski, Ventura team went last (it had nothing to do with politeness).

First out of the gate was the Rupkalvis, Anderson, Kauffman team. Leading this odds on favorite team was Jonas Rupkalvis. As he approached the tee, the jeers and comments from the crowd

seemed to be more than he could handle. Sweat poured from his brow, since he knew that not only were his friends watching but also Iwaoka Sensei, who was ready to critique his every move as it compared to his Aikido. With nerves of steel, Jonas teed up the ball and soundly ripped a 250-yard drive down the center of the fairway, silencing the raucous crowd.

We all stood there with gaping jaws as Jonas calmly turned and headed to his cart. (Editor's note: there is an ongoing investigation to verify reports that Mr. Rupkalvis made a \$10 donation to the AIF in exchange for this story. One witness who refused to be identified stated, "How the heck could he do that? He showed up this morning with a pool cue!" AIF president Iwaoka said, "I am appalled at such activ...did you say donation?")

Stuart Kauffman dropped a 40 foot putt on the first hole to save triple bogey (Editor's note: hey, Stuart, if you had donated \$10 to AIF I would have said "40 foot birdie putt.")

On the fourth hole, a 200-yard par 3,

Wayne Carlson was the only one to lay his tee shot on the green and quickly claimed his \$9 prize money for closest to the pin. (Editor's note: this shot landed two inches from the pin, and he did not even swing, he willed it there. It had nothing to do with his \$25 donation). Tim Spies got closest to the pin on hole 8 with a shot that was reminiscent of Jack Nicholas (Editor's note: hey back off...I wrote this article). After tallying the scores from the front nine, it was obvious that the back was going to be a bit more interesting and a lot less serious.

After a quick bite to eat, we rearranged the teams and headed back out. AIF president Glenn Iwaoka started things off with a 250 yard drive down the fairway of the 10<sup>th</sup> hole for a hole in one...well not exactly...you see, there is this goose roaming the course that now has a slight problem with its back-side.

By the time we reached the 13<sup>th</sup> hole, scorekeeping was a thing of the past, except for Karen Kurowskis' "creative scorekeeping." We now turned our attention to friendly wagering for shots of

*(Continued on page 13)*

*Training With a Significant Other...*  
(Continued from page 10)

he said to me, "You just need to come to the dojo and try it for yourself." With that, I decided to try to understand what kept him so passionate about the training and so driven, and I joined the dojo myself. After Haupt Sensei's opening teisho on my first day, I was hooked, and the rest is history.

My Aikido relationship with my husband is a bit different than most Aikido couples in that he is the instructor in the dojo and I am a student. We trained together as senior and junior student for many years and I always enjoyed having him help me and encourage me along a path he had already gone down. However, after Haupt Sensei's passing, the leadership of the dojo eventually transitioned to him being the dojo cho.

His role in the dojo as the teacher and mine as a student makes it more critical than ever to always put forth the proper energy and to keep personal matters off the mat. Although I do not consider him *my* teacher, as this would only confuse our relationship, I do respect him as a teacher and one that has taught me a great deal about Aikido.

This understanding is the basis for our relationship in the dojo—him as the

teacher and me trying to be a model student for other students to look towards. If this is not upheld and we let our personal feelings show, then the whole hierarchy of the dojo will be compromised. If I do not act towards him in the way in which I want all the other students to act, and instead act towards him as though we are outside the dojo, then the students will determine for themselves that it is okay to be casual with, or worse, disrespectful toward instructors. This, quite obviously, is not the feeling that anyone would want to create. And for that reason, I have come to accept this as my training. Very

*To be able to say to your husband at any time "grab my wrist" and have him be just as excited for the opportunity to attack as you are to do a technique is really a blessing!*

honestly speaking, it can be very difficult. I have to be aware and know inside myself how strong I feel and, depending on personal circumstances, recognize the times when I just cannot be that model student that I need to be. Out of respect for everyone at the dojo, their training, his instruction and the preservation of our dojo's energy, those are the nights that I stay home. Don't get me wrong — most of the time it is not hard. Most of the time it is an absolute blast! To be able to say to your husband at any time "grab my wrist" and have him be just as excited for the opportunity to attack as you are to do a technique is really a blessing!

Though it can be difficult at times to be a model student to your husband, the joys of sharing our training and our way together and seeing what an impact we can make in the world with our Aikido is truly a special thing. In fact, I believe that sharing our Aikido together and understanding each other's training has made us grow closer and stronger in our personal relationship.

I'll always be grateful that he was the one that brought me to Aikido, and that we are able to share it together. Through the years I have come to gain such a great respect and admiration for his instruction, his commitment to the dojo and his students, and to the art in general, that I feel a sense of pride that gives me just one more reason to love him. We work together to make it fun and to make it work, both in and outside of the dojo, and we are stronger individually and as a couple for it. To quote part of Haupt Sensei's teisho the night that I joined Zenshinkan, something that will stick with me for the rest of my life, partners don't need to agree on their individual ways, but they do have to be understanding of each other's way. But if they do agree, then that is "way cool."

*Jennifer Caron is shodan at Zenshinkan Dojo in Worcester, MA.*

*AIF Golf Outing...*  
(Continued from page 12)

skill in return for donations of money. It was not exactly gambling since Iwaoka Sensei told us what the rules were after the shot and I am not sure that anybody won. David Ventura won closest to the pin on number 14 with a brilliant 160 yard shot (that's as good as it gets Dave), and Jonas Rupkalvis (currently under investigation) claimed the 17<sup>th</sup> hole closest to the pin, with his pool cue.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and from the 200 yard marker the last team of Iwaoka, Spies, Carlson, and Kurowski made their final approach with the crowd of 5 surrounding the green. Glenn drilled his shot safely on the carpet three feet from the pin then charged Wayne \$1 to the AIF for the chance to be on the green with him. He made it. Next to hit was Karen Kurowski who took one look and said "that's a

gimme" and returned to the cart. Finally it was my turn. It was imperative that I not land my shot inside Iwaoka Sensei's three foot shot. I purposely placed it in the right bunker but unfortunately, upon second thought, that seemed too obvious. Seeing Glenn and Wayne discussing shugyo, I shot again and this time landed in the left bunker, again too obvious. One more time...finally, on the green, correctly placed between Iwaoka Sensei and Wayne Carlson. As we walked up, I was accused by the crowd of cheating but I explained to them how unaware they were and how duty demanded I hit three balls. Oh the things we have to do in Aikido.

The men's champion is Dick Anderson who shot a legitimate (yeah, right) 88. Dick shot a 44 on the front and on the back. He was overheard saying, "Nothing like a pair of 44's to fill your day," or

something to that effect. The women's champion is Karen Kurowski (she's not into Aikido...yet...but just you wait) who came storming back from the bottom of the women's division to wrestle the championship away from the claws of defeat in a stunning display of athleticism, golf prowess, and beauty (no, there was no cash donation here but being the author's girlfriend has it's advantages).

On a serious note, I would like to thank Glenn Iwaoka Sensei, Marc Nardulli Sensei, Jonas Rupkalvis, Wayne Carlson, Stuart Kauffman, Dick Anderson, David Ventura, and Karen Kurowski for a wonderful event. We raised \$260 for the AIF in our first effort at a golf outing and had a riot doing it. This will be an annual event for us and I would challenge other dojo to try something similar.

*Tim Spies is nidan and an instructor at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL.*

# AAA Nationwide

## Central Region News

**John Bieszk Sensei, AAA Midwest Regional Director**

Onshinkan Dojo in Merrillville, IN hosted a seminar conducted by Hiroshi Tajiri Sensei. In addition to excellent Aikido instruction, students saw Tajiri Sensei's artistic talent as well. Some students took home works of art as well as new Aikido lessons.

The AIF Guest Instructor seminar was hosted at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, with instruction by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai and by Frank Gallo Sensei. The use of Aikido techniques in police applications and tactical situations was emphasized, showing the effectiveness of Aikido techniques in a somewhat different but very important light.

## Upcoming Events

- Jan. 23-25     **Arkansas Seminar**, hosted by Gyokushinkan Dojo in Fort Smith, AR. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Feb. 5-8        **Kangeiko**, hosted by Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL. Instructed by Kengo Hatayama Shihan and AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- Mar. 26-27     **Ontario Seminar**, hosted by Chudokan Dojo in Windsor, ON. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.
- 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.

## Southern Region News

**Ned Danieleley Sensei, AAA Southern Regional Director**

This fall we've had three seminars in the Southern Region: an AAA Teaching Committee seminar in Durham, NC, instructed by Hiroshi Tajiri Sensei and Bill Bunn Sensei, a seminar at Shinjinkan Dojo in Houston, TX, instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai, and a seminar in Atlanta, GA, also instructed by Sato Sensei.

The September seminar in Durham was well attended, with students from all over North Carolina, as well as a large contingent from Georgia. Sensei Tajiri and Bunn focused on tai sabaki and its application to empty-hand and weapons techniques.

The Texas seminar was enthusiastically received by about 80 students. AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai taught bokken kumitachi and some kaeshi-waza, and was accompanied by Stephen Toyoda. The seminar was noteworthy for the large number of dan tests: four shodan, two nidan, two sandan, and one yondan!

In Atlanta, AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai instructed about 50 people in a large variety of techniques, including some very interesting jo nage. Despite the large number of people in a fairly small room, Sato Sensei kept the energy level high and the ukes flying. The seminar also had a large number of dan tests: two shodan, two nidan, one sandan and two yondan!

Keep your eyes on the AAA website for announcements of future seminars!

## Upcoming Events

- Feb. 13-15     **Florida Seminar**, hosted by Seizan Dojo in Winter Park, FL. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai .
- Feb. 27-29     **Texas Seminar**, hosted by Seishinkan Dojo in Dickinson TX. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai

# AAA Nationwide

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

Season's greetings from the AAA Western Region. As we come up on the year-end holidays, our Aikido activities seem to be winding down. Our next event is not until January, where we've scheduled a New Year's Workout at Chushinkan Dojo, Buena Park, CA for Saturday, January 3, 2004, from 10am to noon. Everyone is invited to this informal workout, where instructors will be selected from those present.

At the end of January/beginning of February, we will have our AAA Hakamakai meeting and dan exam pretests—exact date and venue to be forthcoming. After that, our next and only event for some time will be the Western Regional Instructors' Seminar.

### Upcoming Events

Mar. 4-7 **West Coast Instructor Seminar**, hosted by Kenshinkan Dojo in Vista, CA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai

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

Eastern Camp: Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei and Andy Sato Sensei taught at the Eastern Region Camp held Sept. 25 through 28 at Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, NY.

Kobayashi Sensei taught in a clear and insightful manner. He showed different stretching exercises based on ikkyo and kaiten nage. He showed a series of interrelated kaeshi waza that went from nikyo into sankyo into kotegaeshi. He also taught a 13-count kumijo.

AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai taught in his usual clear and joyful manner. He reviewed a lot of tai sabaki, jo waza and bokken waza. He also had enjoyable sessions on koshinage and randori.

Special acknowledgements are given to many people. First and foremost to Bob Caron Sensei of Zenshinkan Dojo for his effort to coordinate the camp. He found the location and, two weeks before the camp, he was told that the mats were moved and there were no mats for the event. He then coordinated the location of mats. The result was that Zenshinkan brought mats from their dojo, Corey Guilbault brought mats from Aikido of Norwalk, and Wil Calero of Shishinkan Dojo lent his mats. Stuart Johnson loaded up the mats from Jikishinkan Dojo and had them over to the camp site by 7:30 AM. He did this alone. The result was a truly enjoyable event. The final attendance was 96 people over the 4 day event. There were eight black belt tests that were wonderfully done.

Hakamakai: There were two hakamakai meetings held at Shishinkan Dojo in New York. The first was held September 14<sup>th</sup>. This was a review and pre-test session led by Joseph Jarman Sensei and Glen Matsuda Sensei for people testing at the Eastern Camp. There were 6 dojo represented.

A second hakamakai meeting was held on Nov. 9, led by Mark Dorfman Sensei and Matsuda Sensei. This session covered jo dori, teaching yoko ukemi, and randori.

Sha: This is the name of the Northeast Region website. This was developed and is maintained by Corey Guilbault of Aikido of Norwalk. The website is [www.aaa-east.com](http://www.aaa-east.com). It is published quarterly. Please visit the site!

### Upcoming Events

Jan. 9-11 **Massachusetts Seminar**, hosted by Metheun Aikido in Metheun, MA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai

Feb. 22 **Hakamakai Meeting**, hosted by Shishinkan Dojo, in Nanuet, NY.

June 25-27 **Worcester Seminar**, hosted by Zenshinkan, MA. Instructed by AAA Chief Instructor Andrew Sato Shihandai.

# Dan Rank Promotions

## Shodan

Eliya Alichkova, Zendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Ivan Bogdanov, Keidokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Casey Burmeister, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH  
Jennifer Caron, Zenshinkan, Worcester, MA  
Rosalyn M. Cooper, Kenshinkan, Vista, CA  
Sandra Cousins, Shinjinkan, Spring, TX  
Heidi Cummins, Shinjinkan, Spring, TX  
Andrew D'Angelo, Zenshinkan, Worcester, MA  
Apollon Dritsas, Aikikan Greece, Piraeus, Greece  
Nikolay Dyakov, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Zbigniew Farion, Seidokan, Olsztyn, Poland  
Elizabeth Foster, Shishinkan, Nanuet, NY  
John L. Harney, Kenshinkan, Vista, CA  
George Hutchinson, Shinjinkan, Spring, TX  
Kenneth E. Kinnear, Jr., Northeast Aikikai, Chelmsford, MA  
Wojciech Korwin-Piortowski, Seidokan, Olsztyn, Poland  
George Kral, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH  
Serafim Emilov Krustev, Keidokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Ronald N. Lawson, Kenshinkan, Vista, CA  
Micah Lestock, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH  
Marcus, Mendez, Kyushinkan, Roswell, GA  
Adam Michalski, Seidokan, Olsztyn, Poland  
Justin Putnam, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Nada Sakal-Novakovic, Shinjinkan, Spring, TX  
Richard Sano, Ganshinkan, Salt Lake City, UT  
Kirsten Sims, Jyushinkan, Logan, UT  
Mort Smith, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Svilen Emilov Stoyanov, Shudokan, Bytom, Poland  
William Sumner, Ryoshinkan, Palatine, IL  
Julie Cunningham Thomas, Memphis Aiki Kai, Memphis, TN  
Dean Wells, Aiki Institute of Spokane, Spokane, WA  
Dennis Yerokhin, Northeast Aikikai, Chelmsford, MA

## Nidan

Cesar Aguirre, Shinjinkan, Spring, TX  
Lara B. Anderson, Jyushinkan, Logan, UT  
Nealson Armstrong, Gyokushinkan, Fort Smith, AR  
Aimee Bel, Zenshinkan, Worcester, MA  
Brice Biggerstaff, Seishinkan, Dickinson, TX

Chris Britton, Kyushinkan, Roswell, GA  
Aaron Dale, Memphis Aiki Kai, Memphis, TN  
Laura DeGraff, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Krasimir Veselinov Getchev, Zendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Hassan Karagozlu, Ryoshinkan, Palatine, IL  
Krasimir Lulchev, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Edward Maclin, Jikishinkan, Brooklyn, NY  
Esteban Martinez, Shoshinkan, Cranston, RI  
James Moline, Kenshinkan, Vista, CA  
Roger Mosconi, Aiki Institute of Spokane, Spokane, WA  
Chrissa Pedersen, Aikido of Broomall, Broomall, PA  
Anna Pietrzyk, Shudokan, Bytom, Poland  
Aaron Todd Poland, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH  
Matthew Reiskin, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Jacek Szpakowski, Hodokan, Gizycko Poland  
Paul Webb, Joshinkan, Cary, NC  
Jonathan Whatley, Joshinkan, Cary, NC  
Robert White, Seibukan, Garner, NC  
Michael Wigginton, Aikido of Broomall, Broomall, PA  
Jason Ziemke, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH

## Sandan

Roger Armstrong, Gyokushinkan, Fort Smith, AR  
Joel Augustin, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Alexander Dobrev, Tendokan, Sofia, Bulgaria  
Frank Gallo, Shoshinkan, Cranston, RI  
Harvey S. Newman, Seishinkan, Dickinson, TX  
Leslie Parks-Casey, Tenshinkan, Chicago, IL  
Grzegorz Pietrzyk, Shudokan, Bytom, Poland  
Charlene Reiss, Choshinkan, Durham, NC  
Ken Yamazaki, Aikido of New York City, New York, NY

## Yondan

Gary Chase, Memphis Aiki Kai, Memphis, TN  
Edward Donnelly, Tetsushinkan, Holland, OH  
Mark Dorfman, Aikido of Broomall, Broomall, PA  
Mark Hazelrigg, Choshinkan, Durham, NC  
Elisabeth Menning, Onshinkan, Merrillville, IN  
John Riggs III, Ta Ch'u Academy, Midland, TX  
Ronald Sims, Jyushinkan, Logan, UT



*Elisabeth Menning's yondan test. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Goines.*



*Michael Wigginton's nidan test. Photo courtesy of Greg Null.*

# Seminars and Events

## AAA Southern Region Teaching Committee Seminar

By Mary Ellen Tucker

On the last weekend in September, the AAA Southern Region Teaching Committee held its fall seminar at the Campus Hills Recreation Center in Durham, NC. Participants arrived from all over North Carolina and other southeastern states to train together.

The Research Triangle area is fortunate to have several active Aikido dojo in close proximity. Three of these, Seibukan, Joshinkan, and Choshinkan, are AAA/AAI affiliates. The dojo cho, Hiroshi Tajiri Shihandai (Seibukan), Bill Bunn Sensei (Joshinkan) and Ned Danieleley Sensei (Choshinkan) are friends and colleagues who collaborate to organize seminars.

The camaraderie at an Aikido seminar both on and off the mat is a powerful experience, creating bonds that stretch over the years and over many miles. Many beginning students attended this seminar, and were welcomed into the circle. The beginners were fortunate to have a fairly equal number of yudansha and experienced students to work with them.

Lessons were led by Tajiri Sensei and Bunn Sensei, and focused on tai sabaki and variations of basic techniques, from ikkyo omote and ura to bokken tai sabaki. For the beginners, and for the yudansha who teach them, the careful guidance of Bunn Sensei and Tajiri Sensei offered the opportunity to learn and refine their practice of these techniques, and to gain insight on teaching from master instructors in the art.

There was only one dan test at this seminar, but it was noteworthy, both for its level of difficulty and the expertise that was demonstrated by the candidate. When Charlene Reiss of Choshinkan Dojo performed her sandan test, she exhibited mastery of advanced techniques,



AAA Southern Region Teaching Committee Seminar.  
Photos courtesy of Ned Danieleley.

both empty-handed and with weapons, consummate tactical skills, and physical endurance in randori, and she was the embodiment of grace in all her movements.

As a student at Choshinkan, this writer had the opportunity to observe as Charlene trained over the past year in preparation for her test. It was satisfying to see the culmination of her efforts, and of those who guided her to reach her goal. Congratulations, Charlene, for a job well done!

Exemplary of the seminar lessons was one that started with the fundamentals, including the correct way to hold a bokken, basic etiquette in weapons practice, stances and strikes, and bokken tai sabaki and suburi. Some of the beginners may have held a bokken for the first time. A bit of satori came to me as we practiced bokken tai sabaki with partners. Nage was instructed to point the bokken slightly to one side to give an opening for



uke to attack. In my turn as nage, I noticed how my body position shifted as I made this adjustment. The AHA! came when I realized that this small change actually gave me the opening for a counter-strike to uke's attack. I suspect that some of the other students who were on the mat that day shared in this little burst of enlightenment.

As a student who has far to go along the path, it seems to me that the time spent in tai sabaki practice is well spent. As these movements are repeated, the mind-body-spirit connection is strengthened to improve awareness and promote understanding of the effect of our actions and their intent.

Mary Ellen Tucker is 6th kyu at Choshinkan Dojo in Durham, NC.

## An Aikido Harvest

By James Landry

October in Indiana: a time of harvest, a time when the fruits of spring and summer labors are brought in, a time to prepare for winter, a time to begin the process of storing the harvest and a time to reflect on the lessons of the previous season, a time of transition.

At Onshinkan Dojo in Merrillville, Indiana we celebrated the changing seasons with a seminar featuring Teaching Committee member Hiroshi Tajiri Sensei. Tajiri Sensei shared with us a bountiful harvest of flowing Aikido, powerful calligraphy, his own delicate blend of sumi-e, and the energy of misogi and kiai training. Onshinkan was filled with students from Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, and Slovenia. Aikidoists of different styles and ages practiced the teachings of Aikido in a warm and safe environment charged with Tajiri Sensei's energy and sense of humor.

Aikido is a path of self-discovery. Tajiri Sensei touched each of us on our own personal journey. A teacher presents us with the lessons we need, a truly effective teacher presents us with these lessons when we are most ready to work with them. Tajiri Sensei's timing was most poignant to many. With graceful motion, exercises flowed into tai-sabaki, and bloomed into technique. Time and time again we were reminded to "not look down," "don't be stuck," "go with the

flow," "let go," "don't think so much." Was he speaking of technique or of dealing with my boss at work? There was no distinction. Furthermore, how did he know about the budget discussion with my boss? Very clearly the mat becomes our mirror. Our lessons on the mat are the same as our lessons out in the "real world."

The mornings started with an invigorating practice of misogi and kiai train-



AAA Indiana Teaching Committee Seminar. Photos courtesy of James Landry.

ing. Autumn leaves were shaken off their branches as kiai rose from our centers and exploded out into the Indiana countryside. Our evenings featured great dinner gatherings complete with story telling that Tajiri Sensei is known for. Some of

us will never forget hearing of the moon princess as we watched a nearly full moon work its way across the night sky.

Tajiri Sensei's art is expressed in ways other than Aikido. His expressions extend to calligraphy and sumi-e, which he graciously shared with us. Many of his works now brighten dojo and homes in this region. In addition to bringing many examples of his work, he demonstrated for us their creation. For most, it was the first time witnessing the brush strokes of this powerful expression. Students also enjoyed their own attempts at calligraphy.

The harvest is in. We all have much to work with this winter: kiai practice to stave off the cold of winter, sumi-e to brighten the dark nights, graceful flowing movement to celebrate the life Aikido shares with us. We will take this all together and prepare to

plant next year's seed with our expression of Aikido that has been flavored with Tajiri Sensei's wonderful teaching.

*James Landry is shodan and an assistant instructor at Onshinkan Dojo, Aikido of Northern Indiana in Merrillville, IN.*

## Making a Connection

By Alan R. Adams

During the weekend of September 26-28, the Toyoda Center, Yushinkan Dojo, of Grand Rapids Michigan had the honor of hosting Edward Germanov Sensei. The chief instructor of the Bulgarian Aikido Association, Germanov Sensei is accustomed to teaching seminars in large gymnasiums, with hundreds of students in attendance. An intimate seminar with Germanov Sensei, or any AAA / AAI Teaching Committee member for that matter, is a fantastic opportunity for training. Germanov Sensei was accompanied on this trip by his wife Maria and a student, Dennis Hocesvar from Slovenia.

Also in attendance were Steven Rehrauer Sensei, and Stephen Toyoda, as well as many other students from Chicagoland, Indiana, Ohio, and California.

*To see someone so accomplished and disciplined in one area, the martial arts, turn that same discipline and energy toward something so seemingly different, like painting, was inspiring.*

Throughout the seminar, participants were treated to the very generous instruction of Germanov Sensei, who exhibited a wealth of knowledge on many Aiki related subjects. An accomplished grap-

pler, Germanov Sensei spent most of the day on Saturday showing an apprehensive group of Aikido students some basic grappling movements. All Yudansha shed their hakama for an enlightening training experience. As Aikido practitioners, we believe that we have done something very wrong if we end up lying on the ground with an attacker on top of us. To the grappler though, this is not a problem. Germanov Sensei showed us that by using many of the same principles that we practice in Aikido, such as leading and redirecting momentum, we can achieve the same peaceful resolutions that we do with Aikido technique. The practice also inspired a new understand-

*(Continued on page 19)*

## Aikido in Roswell

By Richard W. Babin

On the recent weekend of November 14-16, Aikidoka gathered in Roswell, Georgia to celebrate and reaffirm the vision of O-Sensei and the lifetime dedication to the art of Aikido by Fumio Toyoda Sensei, founder of the Aikido Association of America (AAA). While the weather grew progressively colder outside, the energy on the mat generated by 60 students from 12 clubs in 5 states became intense.

After greetings and a traditional warm-up, Andrew Sato Shihandai began the Friday night instruction organized in the fashion that characterized Toyoda Sensei's more than 30 years of full-time teaching. Students began practicing a specific tai sabaki: paired body movements by nage and uke, during which the later is unbalanced. In the first demonstrated technique, nage moved to the weak side of a same-side grab, capturing uke's attacking hand and sweeping it horizontally across the interval between them.

The class was then directed in a kihon waza or basic technique that used the previously practiced tai sabaki, in this case, shihonage (four directions throw). This was particularly appropriate as shihonage was taught and performed by Toyoda Sensei in a very characteristic fashion. After practicing the basic technique, the class was introduced to several oyo waza, or "practical" techniques that represented modifications to the basic shihonage that can be applied to specific variations in the nage-uke relationship. Instruction was not limited to taijutsu (empty handed techniques) but also included many techniques against attack by a weapon (bokken, jo, or tanto) and attacks against nage's weapon. The relationship between an empty-hand attack and a comparable attack using a weapon was explored in some depth during the teaching sessions.

The pattern of instruction outlined above was used throughout much of the weekend, using tai sabaki involving all of the common attacks: strikes to the

*(Continued on page 20)*

*Making a Connection...  
(Continued from page 18)*

ing of ukemi and the need to be flexible and resilient. The grappling lessons tied in to an exploration of tanto dori, where students quickly learned that when Germanov Sensei asks you to drop the knife, you drop the knife.

Saturday night blended into Sunday morning with the third annual Toyoda Center Beach Bash. In true Yushinkan Dojo style, nothing was going to disrupt the party, not even the late September chill in the air, and the high winds coming off of Lake Michigan. The grill was lit, and the music and good times rolled. A few brave people even danced on the windy deck while an even braver few ventured down to the bonfire on the beach. The Toyoda Center Beach Bash is not to be missed, so be sure to watch the calendar and make plans to join us next year.

Sunday morning, back at the dojo, we began with a lesson in massage therapy by Yushinkan dojo's own Kim Wetherbee, CMT. Students were given the basics of massage as a means of repairing and relaxing the body. This was a great way to extract the aches and pains from the previous day's training out of our bodies, as well as warm up for the Sunday session of Aikido. As martial arts students, we spend a lot of time in training building up our bodies, but paradoxically breaking them down as well. Learning the art of massage gives us a means of repairing the damage from our repetitive training practices.

Sunday's Aikido training was an exploration of jo nage. Germanov Sensei

showed a great group of jo techniques that all related to the group of empty hand techniques that we had been working on throughout the seminar. The relationship between empty-hand and weapons technique was the emphasis of this training.

Germanov Sensei is also an avid student of calligraphy and traditional Japanese watercolor painting or Sumi-e. His passion for the art came through all during the seminar as he showed and explained examples of calligraphy and paintings from the great masters and even gave a demonstration of his own. The Toyoda Center now has a few cherished works of art from Germanov Sensei to adorn our dojo walls.

I was touched by Germanov Sensei's passion for painting. To see someone so accomplished and disciplined in one area, the martial arts, turn that same discipline and energy toward something so seemingly different, like painting, was inspiring. The seminar as a whole was a lesson in learning to find the connections between things that may seem totally unrelated: the relationship between a throw with the jo and an empty hand throw, the correlation between Aikido and grappling arts, the association between a joint lock and a massage technique, the connection between the physical and the aesthetic. When we can learn to make these connections, Aikido becomes something more than a system of martial arts techniques, or a good way to break a sweat. Only through making connections can we truly learn to use Aikido in our daily lives.

*Alan Adams is shodan and an instructor at the Toyoda Center, Yushinkan Dojo in Wyoming, MI.*



*Georgia Seminar. Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff.*

*Aikido in Roswell...*

*(Continued from page 19)*

head and body and grasps of the same, opposite and both wrists and lapels. Emphasis was placed on blending, capturing center and energy conservation.

Sato Sensei did not limit himself entirely to the traditional material of the AAA curriculum, however. On Saturday afternoon, for example, he introduced a series of paired bokken techniques, both static and dynamic that progressively led to an elegant kumitachi (paired weapons drill), during which nage sequentially blocked three of uke's bokken strikes while retreating and then countered by a spinning attack with a horizontal cut to uke's center. This progression of exercises was designed to strengthen the perception of ma-ai (distance), hyoshi (timing) and zanshin (continuing awareness) as well as learning to maintain the proper posture. The staccato tapping from 30 pairs of bokken colliding could be heard from the parking lot like a percussion band gone wild!

Near the end of each session (Friday evening, Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning) dan testing was undertaken. Two candidates for shodan and one for nidan demonstrated kihon and oyo waza, empty-handed and with weapons; and performed hanmi handachi (sitting defense against a stand-

ing attack) culminating with a randori (multiple sequential and simultaneous standing attacks). One candidate for sandan demonstrated, among many other skills, aiki-bokken kumitachi. Two candidates for yondan demonstrated kihon, oyo, and henka (changing) waza with emphasis on their redirection of energy. Each then demonstrated their teaching skills by instructing a "class" on a basic and then a related applied technique.

The seminar was held within a ballroom of the Holiday Inn, in Roswell. It was particularly convenient to be able to change into a gi in your room and ride down to the "dojo" below without having to deal with a locker room change of clothes. Likewise, eating was easy as there were many varied meal choices in the immediate neighborhood. The Saturday evening banquet was of the highest order with excellent food and service, and the skilled illusions of one of the attending Aikidoka, who is also an accomplished magician. (It put a whole new twist on the concept of "leading uke!")

Kyushinkan Dojo, the local AAA affiliate hosted the event, putting in a lot of behind the scene effort and running it seamlessly. One unintended side-effect of laying mats on the meeting room carpet was discovered Friday night when they were seen to drift apart rather ran-



*Georgia Seminar. Photo courtesy of Laura DeGraff.*

domly and rapidly. The hosts ingeniously solved the problem by the next morning using double-sided tape and plastic insulation board to fence-in the mats from the walls. The other problems encountered and easily avoided were the chandeliers hanging from an otherwise high ceiling and the need to dodge two supporting columns center mat. Neither received any atemi during the three-day event.

All in all, the seminar was a very worthwhile and enjoyable experience, learning new technique, sharpening up old technique, getting an idea of what the next benchmark might be, rededicating to the ideals of Aikido, re-acquainting with some really nice people and meeting others for the first time. Bokken will be swinging in the Southland's AAA affiliated dojo.

*Richard W. Babin is 2nd kyu at Memphis Aiki-Kai in Memphis, TN.*

## Houston Fall Seminar

*By Heidi Cummins*

Shinjinkan Dojo welcomed back Sato Sensei and Stephen Toyoda the weekend of October 10<sup>th</sup>. What can I possibly say about a seminar given by Sato Sensei that hasn't already been said? He's seamless, seamless Sato Sensei. He can take a technique from Aikitaiso and unfold it, opening it up into kihon waza and then oyo waza and henka waza. By adding bokken, he shows us the history of the technique and we understand because *his* understanding is so crisp and clear.

Stephen Toyoda was, as usual, the very definition of affable. He fits in and is welcomed everywhere and I'm sure, every dojo welcomes him as if he were one of their very own. He made the most nervous white belts comfortable with his

patience and challenged the higher ranks with his committed attacks and strong spirit. I couldn't help but think that somewhere from the edge of the mat, Toyoda Shihan was sitting back beaming with pride and satisfaction.

Adding to the intense training of the weekend there was an unprecedented number of dan tests! Nine all together, yes, nine! Four Shodan tests, two Nidan, one Sandan, one retest for Sandan, and one retest for Yondan. The ki must have been high because everyone passed!

Personally, I enjoyed the bokken kumitachi that Sato Sensei brought back from Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei. I thought it was dynamic and stimulating. One of our new white belts was very funny when she said, "I didn't think they'd *let* a white belt pick up a bokken."

Sato Sensei also showed us a paired countering exercise where uke and nage change from attack to counter attack without ever losing contact. Alternating, back and forth, over and over, slowly stretching each other. It reminded me of Hatayama Sensei's slow thorough stretches.

The seminar was well attended by about eighty Aikidoka. In addition to the energy of the training, it was great to meet new friends and greet old ones. Thank you to Sato Sensei and Stephen Toyoda for coming to Shinjinkan dojo. It is always a pleasure to take instruction from you and to train with you. We are all looking forward to the next time.

*Heidi Cummins is shodan and an assistant instructor at Shinjinkan Dojo in Spring, TX.*

## The Lighter Side...



### The Importance of Stretching

*Photo courtesy of Greg Null*



**Seminar fee: \$35. Hakama: \$100.  
Getting a massage from Sato Sensei:  
Priceless**

*Photo courtesy of Matija Grabner.*

### Joyful training, plain and simple.

*By Heidi Cummins*

Arrive neat and clean.  
Bow like you mean it.  
Train quietly.  
Kiai loudly.  
Attack with certainty.  
Fall down, understand.  
Get up every time more confident.  
Say Onegai shimasu,  
loud enough for your partner to hear it.  
Say Arigato gozaimashita, the same way.  
Yell, 'hai Sensei!' Every time.  
Do what you're told and trust in it.  
Shut up and train.  
No, it's not right. If it were you'd be at home.  
Stop thinking.  
Have no room for excuses, complaints or self-doubt.  
Be happy you are able to train.  
Internalize frustration.  
Nobody gets it right the first 1,000 times.  
Get over it you're bringing everyone else down.  
Grab with energy and intent, not with fear and malice.  
Have energy and intent.  
Be flexible, if not in body then in mind.  
Throw, remembering each person is different.  
Pin, knowing where uke stops.  
Do not cause pain.  
Do not wait for pain.  
Do not wait for physical force.  
Do not anticipate.  
Do not be stubborn.  
Keep your mind peaceful and calm, and your expression neutral.  
Show others what you understand.  
Don't teach what you don't know.  
Accept correction graciously and be thankful you are worthy of it.  
Learn to trust yourself.  
Extend compassion and ki to everyone.  
Deepen your understanding and grow in your humility,  
clean something.  
Don't wait to be told, you've just been told.  
It's part of your training.  
Yes it is.  
Wear your shoes,  
at all times,  
when you are not on the mat,  
this is not a commune.  
No it's not.  
Do all of this all the time.  
Still don't get it?  
Don't worry,  
Just keep training,  
no one gets it right the first 1,000 times.

## AI-KI-D'OH! #2 IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE BELT.

By Jonathan Knipping

