



5:45-6:45: Zazen



7:00-8:00: Aikido



8:00-9:00: Breakfast



9:00-10:00: Dojo cleaning



10:00-11:00: Grappling



11:15-12:00: Shodo



12:00-1:00: Lunch



1:00-2:00: Aikido

Message

from the Chief

Aikido World Supplement

Aikido World

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The 2004 summer Kenshusei training started with some hesitation since half the Kenshusei were still waiting to hear from immigration about their visa status to enter the USA. This was on the eve of June 29th... not a good sign.

As usual, the universe provides what we need when we need it the most; visa clearance came through and all arrived to start the month of no return.

The month of July proved again how much more I have to train in my own personal development. All through the month the students displayed strength of commitment to their art despite the hardships of daily training. It gave me renewed energy and conviction that what I have been training for is worth the efforts and sacrifices we all make to pursue our training.

Though the month went by quickly, each day gave me much time to see what it means to train the human spirit and mind. All the students gave their hearts for this moment in time, from the hard pressure of Germanov Sensei's relentless instruction, adjusting to group living without privacy, training despite the body aches and lack of sleep, figuring out all the dojo rules both implicit and implied, and the list goes on.

The kenshusei program is meant to offer a glimpse into the life of an uchideshi, the constant pressure to extend his/her existence in life moment by moment and to excel in the chosen art of their pursuit. In reality though it is much more. It is an education for one to learn to serve others.

"Service to others" is the mainstay of all dojo programs. It is the education of life to go beyond oneself for the sake and betterment of others. For instance, as each of the students cleaned the bathrooms, it started as a chore but as time went on they began to see it as an opportunity to make it clean and ready for others. That attitude started to become the same in all they did each day every day, whether it was dojo cleaning, zazen, cooking, or Aikido class. To serve others in any way you can, despite whatever harsh reality the world or the sensei throws at you. Watching all the Kenshusei, I felt they came to understand this way of life we call shugyo.

It was my great pleasure to work with Germanov Sensei during the month. He revealed the depth of his understanding of shugyo not only to the Kenshusei, but also to the students here at Tenshinkan dojo.

Thank you all for participating in the program and I look forward to seeing each of you again soon.

Andy Sato
Chief Instructor ~ AAA/AAI

30 Days Training at Tenshinkan Dojo—Why?

By Ed Germanov

More than 10 years ago, I came to Tenshinkan dojo to be Toyoda Sensei's uchideshi. I did not do it because I knew what uchideshi means; I did it because I loved Toyoda Sensei with all my heart.

Here I learned a lot of things that people who do not practice Aikido may not understand, such as honor, dignity, moral and mental power, humbleness, etc.. I made friends for life –Tajiri Sensei and Sato Sensei. Invited by Sato Sensei and the Toyoda family, I came again to Tenshinkan dojo in July of 2004, but now I had different position...

Here I found a little strange mixture of people who wanted to be uchideshi: Bulgarians, Americans and Croatian. I am saying "strange mixture" because of the different ways of thinking between the Europeans and Americans.

From the beginning I made very strict and hard rules for everybody and we were ready to start with ...Zazen. From my own experience I know that this is the hardest and most hated part of the uchideshi training. People do not know and do not understand what it is all about, they hate the pain and they do not want to wait! What is going to happen? My Shin or Mumonkan? How is it possible for the nothingness to have a spirit and what is this "Door" to the "No Door"? What kind of nonsense is this?

I tried to explain, without forcing, most principals and ways of practicing Zen, the way that I learned from Toyoda Shihan. I was able to see the change in the uchideshi, they were reborn again and again with every bell sound, indicating the end of the Zazen, with every ki breathing, with every Koto dama. Without even they, the uchi-deshi, realizing that they were becoming stronger spiritually and were ready to continue beyond their physical limits, they started to understand what is Mu Ga (to forget your ego) and Mu Ichi Motsu (to possess the emptiness).

At the end of their training period they were ready to go beyond themselves, beyond their limits, and they finished Sesshin as a group, without any exceptions—six hours meditation, without any efforts.

Morning Aikido training is like Misogi training, it cleans you and recharges you with energy and good mood. After that we were continuing with (for me the most important part of the uchideshi training) cleaning the dojo. Here you can see clearly what kind of person you are. Are you a thorough person? The most important thing, does he understand the point of this part of the training? If we do not clear the place of learning, "the way", then how are we going to clean our soul or spirit, so we can learn new things and face challenges? Calligraphy is very hard and spiritual practice. Toyoda Sensei used to say that the ink is your energy, if you concentrate, be strong and calm, then your calligraphy will be balanced and pretty. The calligraphy helps us to combine the spiritual and the physical, and also our Aikido practice.

We had long hours of Aikido training. Most of the students found out that the end of your physical energy does not mean anything, you just have to keep going and do not give up.

Sato Sensei's classes were very hard and precise, very fast and technical. All of us were happy that we could train under his guidance.

Now when everything is over and all the uchideshi went back home there is big emptiness and absence in me. I miss all the young and crazy people that came from everywhere. All of them were very strong and did not give up. I am so proud of them, I hope that one day I will meet them again on the mat.

Ed Germanov

Dojo cho of Tendokan Dojo, Sofia Bulgaria
Director of AAI-Bulgaria
Head Instructor of the Bulgarian Aikido Association
Director of the Bulgaria AAI teaching and testing committees
President of the Bulgarian Aikido Foundation



SUMMER Kenshusei program

A Drop in the Bucket

By Jason Moreland

Kenshusei. I now know that to completely understand this word you must sign on the dotted line. This summer program has become so much more than I ever expected. I came to Tenshinkan with only a very small understanding of what life would be like once here. Aikido is a big part of what we have done in July but really it is only a drop in the bucket of what actually takes place in the program.

The days are long and the nights seem too short. Every moment is fun and yet extremely challenging. This is an experience that will change your life. During my time here I have experienced so many things that words can't describe, so I will tell about some of the great times.

Daily life starts at 5:00am for me. This has been fairly easy to manage since our first class is Zazen and all of the Kenshusei are sleeping on the wood floor in the Zen Dojo. Being on time has not been a problem. This was my first experience doing meditation training and all I can say about this is, sitting seiza for 5 to 10 minutes is no longer a problem for me. It has become a gift. After six hours of meditation everyday seems easier.

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

One shower and laundry is like randori. Every time it is different and chaotic.

Next we have morning Aikido. This in my opinion is the hardest class of the day. Early to rise, one hour meditation, and then class. So after the morning koshinage class the rest of the day seems to go by faster. Our daily lives here are filled to capacity. Every day has a new feel to it. No two days are alike.

Everyday we have Shodo (calligraphy). Germanov Sensei is always there to let you know right from left and energy from laziness. I mean Shodo is more difficult than one first thinks. More seiza. Sensei's calligraphy is very powerful, yet graceful and beautiful, unlike mine, which he said was "bad but not bad." I think once he even commented that maybe it was Chinese instead of Japanese calligraphy. This is something all Aikidoists should know since it is so connected with Aikido.

Sato Sensei prepares lunch for us. Usually the Kenshusei rotate with the preparation of lunch. Having traditional Japanese food for lunch everyday has been a major change for me. In Arkansas there are not

many good places to eat Japanese food. Sato Sensei is a wonderful cook. Every meal was always excellent.

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 rest of our days are filled with training in Aikido. To go from 8 hours a week of training to 8-10 hours a day is a huge mountain to climb the first week. I can tell you that when this program is over your understanding of shugyo will be complete.

The month has been full of new experiences. Living with 10 other students and 2 instructors could be a whole article in itself. One shower and laundry is like randori. Every time it is different and chaotic.

I hope that everybody in our association gets to train with Germanov Sensei. His Aikido is very graceful yet awesomely powerful. He is the most intense person I have ever trained with. His presence on the mat can be felt from every spot in the dojo. When I hear a sensei say "extend ki," I will always think of Germanov Sensei. His extension of ki can be felt from the start of the attack to the finish, and when you try to peel yourself off of the mat. I am looking forward to having another opportunity to train with him. It will be an honor and pleasure.

July has also introduced me to many new friends. My new friends from Bulgaria have been wonderful. It will be a loss for me when they return home. This last month of training and daily life will be missed. I have spent 24/7 with them and they have become like family. We have had to help each other a great deal to survive the month. Not to forget my fellow American Kenshusei. Without you guys, the month would have been an eternity since I don't speak Bulgarian. Robby and John have trained hard and endured a lot. I look forward to seeing all of you on the mat soon. Train hard and for John, "focus".

Jason Moreland is shodan 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.

This Warrior Way

By Peter G.

We know that we can see ourselves in anything we do since everything comes from inside. As Wynton Marsalis, the great jazz trumpet player says, you should be invested in everything you do, “the way you tie your shoes” should be the same way you play your trumpet.

We can consider self-awareness as a first step for development. Only after that can we develop ourselves and our great spirit. However, there is no self-awareness without development and vice versa, since things in life are not so linear.

Our entire life can be too short to discover everything that is inside us – our ego, our energy, the animal inside, the garbage inside or even the whole universe inside us, as Morihei Ueshiba found out.

I see it more like a constant spiral process to discover ourselves in the practice of our life and then to overcome our weaknesses and internal barriers, to dig deeper and bring to the surface all the beauty of our nature – our love, endless compassion, wisdom, internal power.

So I think that finally we need to constantly discover and at the same time to develop through practice and for all that to happen around non-changeable universal principles. This practice that the great masters have given us is a big present to us.

I see Aikido as the only martial art that implements the universal principal of love on both a mental and physical level. But why do we nowadays still need martial arts as actually there is no war (excluding some places in the world)? If we go deeper we can see that frequently we are in war with ourselves. Most people are also in constant mental conflict with each other. And this happens as still most people have not succeeded in bringing to the surface their love and compassion and they are still slaves of their limited ego.

To Have or To Be

By Daniela Petkova

Aikido all day long. Training from dawn till dusk. Everything we do is training – the meditation, the Aikido, the calligraphy, the grappling, and the cleaning, the cooking, and Aikido again etc. What’s the feeling from all that?

Maybe this is a way to get out, just for a moment, of the social framework. Maybe through every movement, exercise, technique, or training session, we change unnoticeably and we give up the everyday troubles, fears, stress, and tension. Maybe that’s a moment of our lives that we should live, in order to appreciate it. All of that teaches us how to survive in

Certainly, one month cannot change you totally but it can set the beginning of a big change.

this changeable, unstable, and uncertain world. Aikido gives us the freedom that small kids have: the freedom of a mind unencumbered by society. They just have fun and enjoy life. The dynamic movement raises a calm spirit, mind, and consciousness.

Maybe this program is a means for gaining an intimate knowledge of ourselves in the environment and spirit of Aikido. In this way we can understand what we want, love, where we are right now, and how to go on with our lives. After these thirty days devoted entirely to the training and self-perfection I find myself willing to train more and more, and to be engaged with only this activity.

As of now, there still are such wars. To develop our positive nature (which I believe is inherent in all of us) in this war field and even spread the positive energy around, we need martial arts, sincere practice, and masters to guide us through this warrior way.

Why did I write all this? Because all these possibilities and chances to develop the Aikido warrior spirit are given at the Kenshusei one month course at AAA headquarters in Chicago, which I participated in. Certainly, one month cannot



For example, after every Zen practice I feel like a whole new person, filled with energy and freed from unneeded thoughts and troubles. This energy gives freedom. After every training, you realize how much you have to learn, and how much the training helps you.

The calligraphy practice is very interesting too. It shows you what your real momentary state of mind is. When you “write out” the kanji, you express your inner condition, to what extent you are free from thoughts, to what extent you are calm and steadfast, unencumbered with problems, what the level of your concentration is. This shows what your Aikido is – torn up, light, changeable etc. it shows what you are in your work and your life.

After every hour, devoted to the dojo you see more clearly the connection between Aikido and real life. In fact every situation is an original projection of Aikido –

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change you totally but it can set the beginning of a big change. There is everything one can demand – great masters, great Aikido practice, great international community centered around Aikido principles, calligraphy practice, Zen practice, and even grappling, which prepares us to react in case we are very close to each other in a fight.

Daily we can see ourselves and our attitude toward life when making calligraphy (as Germanov Sensei says, there are mas-

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A Humbling Experience

By Robby McCullough

I must first acknowledge my teachers, fellow Kenshusei, loved ones, the tenacious students of Tenshinkan, Soshinkan, and Ryoshinkan, and the Toyoda family. These people are the reason for my success in completing the summer Kenshusei program. It literally took a village to help me through this incredibly intense experience.

My time spent at Tenshinkan was beyond the physical and metaphysical. I could never describe it adequately because the experience was ineffable. So, I will attempt to paint a representative picture of it, and share some of the lessons I learned.

As soon as I arrived, my feet blistered badly. I do not remember ever needing so much tape, ibuprofen or ointment in my life. The pressure was so great on us in the beginning that I found myself crying frequently in between classes. Also, I battled a head cold the first week; it was my body's way of purging toxins worked

out of my system by the intense routine. During the night, I sweated profusely while sleeping on the zen dojo floor. It wasn't a terribly hot summer for Chicago, but I found it so difficult to relax and bring my body temperature down. We trained from sunrise to well after sunset on most nights, with perhaps a

It is said that soldiers in war make gallant sacrifices not for the greater good of us all, but for the soldier crouching in the next fox hole.

couple of hours break to rest, do laundry, or call home. My mind and body pleaded for mercy. I became so disillusioned, the thought of quitting crossed my mind quite often. By the end of the first week I had fallen into a deep hole of doubt and regret.

Now, I cannot pinpoint the day or the moment, but a part of me died at Tenshinkan. I had conquered fear, doubt, and disbelief. As time marched on, I became stronger and no longer needed tape, ibuprofen, or muscle ointment. I rose above the pain and derision, and discovered a

spirit inside myself that would not quit. I cared little for the certificate, or the results of physical and mental conditioning. I no longer felt alone in the company of strangers. Instead, I reveled in the company of good character, and great instructors. I learned important lessons on and off the mat, listened to great stories, ate great meals, laughed heartily and slept soundly in the anticipation of the next day. Nothing else really mattered except for the time spent, and the memories made. So, I had no goals, other than an intangible one that only I could attain in my own little world behind closed eyes.

It is said that soldiers in war make gallant sacrifices not for the greater good of us all, but for the soldier crouching in the next fox hole. Meaning, times of strife bring people as close together as siblings. I now share a similar bond with my fellow Kenshusei, despite our personal and cultural differences. We started it and finished it together. We found ways to have fun in even the most boring of tasks. Along the way, I needed their help and support, and I received it on more than a

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A Month of Surprises

By Kiril Dimitrov

I came from Bulgaria to be a student in the Kenshusei program for one month. It has been exciting to be here. Not only for the training program, which is rich in Aikido, but also because it is my first time in the USA. When I arrived at Tenshinkan I saw a dojo that I had never seen before, a real dojo with rooms close to the mat and a kitchen inside also, things that make it easier for me and the others to train and be here.

Here at Tenshinkan I have found new Aikido from the training, which was all day everyday. It was very nice for me to meet so many new people and to train with them. I am very happy to have had the opportunity to work with the other students with whom I have become good friends.

During this month we also had the time to go and train at Ryoshinkan and Soshinkan dojos, which was very exciting and fun. This was a change from be-

ing at Tenshinkan every day.

This month was full of new surprises for me. I found out on the day of kyu testing that Germanov Sensei had asked that I test. I was a little surprised because I had never tested for anything outside of Bulgaria. I was happy to have had the chance to test here. Better yet, after the test, Germanov Sensei told me I passed.

Training at Ryoshinkan dojo was an experience that I will never forget. It is a place with amazing architecture. Here they also train in Iaido and other martial arts besides Aikido. Summer Camp 2004 was my first national camp in the USA and I trained with people from all over the world.

Soshinkan dojo was also a great training experience because Garza Sensei taught an hour of Iaido. This was my first training experience where the instructor walked around class swinging a real sword.

Part of our training at Tenshinkan dojo was massage. I was thrilled that a great



Aikido Instructor like Sato Sensei can throw so hard on the mat but be so good at massage. Much of the rest of our training was with Germanov Sensei. He taught Zazen which led up to the last day when we had a 6 hour meditation. He also taught calligraphy classes. In Shodo, Germanov Sensei let everyone make calligraphy on rice paper and then he would tell us what was wrong with it. With mine he said it was not so good, my "DO" looked short and fat. Also he taught grappling. This was great for me because it gives another option for self defense, if I ever needed it. All of the

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A Deeper Understanding

By Jonathan Houle

I left Spokane, Washington at 7:00 in the evening. My flight was delayed in Las Vegas, not the worst place to be delayed, but I spent the time in the airplane. I arrived in Chicago at five in the morning and I got to the dojo as fast as I could. I was late for my first day. I had met Germanov Sensei prior to this program, although I figured he would not remember me, and I thought that I would be beaten with a bokken. I sat outside for an hour, wondering if Sato Sensei had forgotten about me, until they came downstairs for Aikido class. Germanov Sensei answered the door and said, "Kenshusei program?" And then it began.

The first week I was at Tenshinkan was rough. I was having trouble getting in the routine of things; plus I did not think that I would click with the two other Americans that were there, let alone the Bulgarians. This is not to mention the Zazen. The first session I moved all the time, trying to make myself comfortable. Afterwards Germanov Sensei ripped us and instructed us not to move anymore. This was enough. Germanov Sensei is like a gentle bull, all he has to do is ask you nicely, because you certainly do not want him to be angry. Zazen seemed to get harder the more we did it. There were

Fatigue was constant; however it meant nothing and neither did pain.

times when I could not get up half way though and the team would be on their second lap around the Zen hall and I would finally muster up enough willpower to walk. Then, after five minutes of walking, we would have to sit again for another twenty to thirty minutes. Robby and Jason did not seem to have any problems with it, even though they complained about it afterwards, and neither did the Bulgarians have any trouble at all.

Not so long had passed when eventually the harsh realities of uchideshi life subsided and I became accustomed to the day to day routine. Training was endless. Even when we were not training in Ai-

Stability of Mind

By Dimitar Angelov

Aikido is one of the most popular martial arts in the world and has participants of all ages and from different professions. Unlike other martial arts, Aikido is not competitive. In the AAA, students train in meditation, sho-do and ho-jo: inter-development practices that are invariably connected to each other and to Aikido.

My home dojo is Shidokan and my instructor is Danail Prangov Sensei. For me Aikido brings stability of mind. If I were not involved in martial arts, my life would not be the same and I would be a different person.

In January I accepted the proposal of Germanov Sensei to take part in this summer Kenshusei program. In Bulgaria I only had three to four classes weekly. In this program, I was immersed in six to seven classes a day. In the beginning it was very hard for me, but after one week I got into the rhythm of things.

Our instructors worked very intently with the students. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to practice under the instruction of Sato Sensei several times weekly.

During the Kenshusei program I learned

kido, we were constantly pushing ourselves in other disciplines like shodo, grappling, cleaning, cooking, and drinking. Free time, also known as sleepy time, became training; trying not to anticipate the hours and hours of training that lay ahead. Fatigue was constant; however it meant nothing and neither did pain. A new word was imbued into my soul; "shugyo." Its meaning at first was mysterious and intriguing to me. Sensei explained it to me but I think that the only way to understand it was to taste it for myself. Its relentless expectations will forever drive me to attain a deeper understanding of myself, ironically through letting go of myself.

Slowly the kenshusei team had become a tight-knit family, with Germanov Sensei as one father and Sato Sensei as another father. Toyoda Sensei felt like the father

many new techniques and I met many new people. I also had the opportunity to take part in the summer camp at Ryo-shinkan dojo and was fortunate enough to visit Soshinkan dojo, under the hospitality of Garza Sensei.

During the program we worked very hard all the time. In Tenshinkan dojo it is possible to feel entirely the ambiance of a true dojo with the opportunity for development. My training in this Kenshusei program is one big step on the way of my development in the martial arts.

I am thankful for the tasty Japanese food that Sato Sensei prepared for us daily, and for his attention on the mat. I hope this visit to Tenshinkan dojo will not be the last and that I will continue to develop in Aikido. The Kenshusei program has been the most intensive training for me hitherto. I believe that everybody who took part in this summer's Kenshusei program will continue to train hard in the sphere of martial arts. I also believe that in the future this program will attract many other crazy people.

I would like to thank Sato Sensei and Germanov Sensei for their leadership and their efforts in organizing this program.

Dimitar Angelov is 2nd kyu at Shidokan Dojo in Bulgaria.

that I never knew, though it was like he was here with us in everything that we did. I never met him personally, but I feel that I met the part of him that mattered. It seems that through Sato Sensei, Germanov Sensei, and everyone else who has had the pleasure of experiencing Toyoda Sensei's teachings, continue the spirit that everybody loved in him so much. Just like in Zazen; when we hold onto thoughts the pain is unbearable, however when we let go of these thoughts and focus on our breath or hara, the pain becomes irrelevant as we reside totally in the moment. I do not profess to be a Zen master or anything—maybe when I am tenth dan—but this is the concept that I understand.

Our language gap, at first, kind of polarized the groups into American and not

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Going Down the Same Path

By Neda Filcheva

After twelve hours of flying and five hours of layovers in Prague and New York we arrived at Chicago on June 30th 2004. All of us had some expectations in our minds. But from the moment we passed customs in Chicago airport, we saw a world different from anything we had ever seen before.

Our group consisted of three people, all Bulgarian, Aikidoists, and friends. The purpose of our trip was to develop our technique and to expand our knowledge of the world.

From the moment I started to train in Aikido I wanted to know what Kenshusei meant. I had never trained all day before starting this program, and this was my way of finding out what this it meant. Now I have this experience and I can say, if you are a person who wants to learn more deeply and to find people who share your ideas this is the place to start.

Now I realize that I lost a lot of my illusions, but the real experience is more than just reading about it.

The first week at Tenshinkan was very challenging for me. Time passed slowly and I felt far from home and my close friends. In one moment I accepted the new things happening around me and I achieved emotionally stability.

The first difficult thing was the physical strain and thinking I could not go on. I



remembered something Germanov Sensei used to say to me—if you think you can not go on you will not, but if you think you can you will. Each time I reached this point and continued it made me stronger. I can say that in this first week my inner voice told me three times I can't go on but my body somehow kept going.

To sleep on the wood floor, to wake up 6:00am and to do Zen meditation every morning is something a person must be motivated to do. We trained in Aikido five to eight hours a day. All this training makes you feel like you are part of something bigger than yourself. The first days you have a lot of pain from hard training. After the first week your body starts to adjust and your mind begins to open to learning.

Every day started with meditation, which gives you power and concentration for the first Aikido class. After this we had breakfast and dojo cleaning. Calligraphy is something new for most of us that

gives us an idea of the spiritual and mental part of Aikido. Some of the days we had to do work for the dojo or we had some free time for ourselves. In the afternoon, we had Aikido classes that went to the end of the day. Each class had a different instructor.

We tried in our free time to see some of the tourist attractions in Chicago, like the art museum or the Sears Tower. In all of our trips to downtown someone from Tenshinkan always made sure we had maps and directions. Sometimes they even drove us to where we were going. This was a good feeling to know that so many people here are so kind.

For the people who may want to do this program in the future, I want to say that this Aikido dojo taught me how to train hard, to live together with a lot of people, and proper dojo etiquette. I am sure that I can incorporate this experience in my daily life and that it will bring me more satisfaction and fullness.

After two weeks in the dojo I felt like one with the others; when we did work we did it together and took responsibility for our actions.

I think that you must first put your life in order and then you can start to maintain ideal relationships with other people. If you can control your body and mind in the dojo you can control your life and the things around you. We don't need to battle with each other, we should all be brothers and sisters who can go down the same path together.

Neda Filcheva is 3rd kyu in Bulgaria.

*Deeper Understanding...
(Continued from page 7)*

American. This got to me a little bit so I decided to make the Bulgarian language my endeavor. Sayings such as "mamka mu", "iscam da te chucam," "moyat brat," "haide milichco," "gladen sam," and "pichka," became a part of my vocabulary and a part of the dialogue with my new family. Our friendships slowly became as close as blood. Like soldiers relying on each other, if one was down the others would pick him or her up. This was helpful in the closing hours of Wednesday night. In the end it felt as if I

was saying, "chaw" to a brother and sister rather than a training partner.

So here I am at Tenshinkan's computer writing my paper after almost all the team has left. Time has slowed almost to a standstill, almost as if it is waiting for me to train. Training has acquired new meaning for me. I can not see anything that matters more than it. This experience has given me a new appreciation for the time that I have, RIGHT NOW. Not in the future. Even still, trying to articulate the moment with the concept of time is silly. I would fully endorse this program

with every ounce of my being. I implore anybody interested in a deeper understanding of life itself to turn to an existence such as an uchideshi enjoys.

I would like to thank my new brothers and sisters, Germanov Sensei, Sato Sensei, Toyoda Sensei, and the Toyoda family, the founder of Aikido, the founder of Martial Arts, the founder of Zen, the founder of humans, the Universe. Life.

Jonathan Houle is 6th kyu at Roshinkan in Spokane, WA.

A New Generation

By Robert Malic

I remember my first arrival at Tenshinkan dojo in March 1998. It was cold and windy, especially in the morning Zazen class at 6:00. The warm body, but cold Gi, makes you shake the whole time, but sometimes also makes you sleepy. After that, we trained a lot every day like the other uchideshi. The days with Toyoda Sensei and other teachers were memorable so therefore I came again in 2000, and for the Grand Opening in 2001, for a two month program each time.

Toyoda Sensei's dream was to have a strong place for AAI students, because AAA and particularly AAI have been growing. So Ryoshinkan dojo was built for that purpose, to bring together people with Aikido. He was bigger than his physical body--he traveled many times to Europe and tried to connect students from around the world and teach them many things in specialized programs like seminars. This he offered to students on a professional level. Aikido, weapons, zazen, shodo, Japanese language, ikebana.

This time in 2004, I came to see a new generation of teachers and students at the Chicago AAA dojos. Being a teacher at Eidokan dojo, I can't train as much, so this Kenshusei program was good for my mind and body in the warm summer time. When I heard that Germanov Sensei and Sato Sensei (direct students of

Toyoda Sensei) would teach from 5:30am to 9:15pm, with a group of at least ten people from USA, Bulgaria, and Croatia, I decided to come. Again, shu-gyo!!

I took a gi, brought two bags, got on an airplane, and came to Chicago. Laura and Chris picked me up from the airport.

At the end of the week we went to Soshinkan dojo for their 10 year anniversary. Every guest instructor took part in teaching. Then after class we had drinks and food. Thanks to Bob Garza and students!!

After the weekend, we started again on Monday at 5:45 for zazen. In a calm mood we put our hands together, sat on the cushions and started to clear our minds. At the end we did torifune, furi-tama and kototama. Then we had Aikido training from 7:00 to 8:00am, ate breakfast together, and then cleaned the dojo. This was the best way to understand the purpose of this place, the students and teachers who built this dojo over the years. Interpolation between Japanese history and modern methodology in teaching gave a special feeling of a place.

The next class was grappling from 10:00 to 11:00 taught by Germanov Sensei. For purpose of self development we did a lot of different things with the same principles, but different goals. So grappling is very connected to Aikido because of the use of pins, locks and bars, which makes you think of a lot of variations. After class we were ready for Shodo. The class tried to do our best with the brushes and ink. My perception is that Shodo shows our level of Aikido and the way of our style. We will need a lot of practice when we get back home once we buy paper and brushes. Then lunch comes with Sato Sensei every day and we talk about things in dojo, eat with chopsticks, kneeling near



the lunch table.

We took another class by Sato Sensei from 1:00-2:00, with Aikido, weapons, or sometimes Zen massage. Kids and teen classes went from 4:00 to 6:00. This is a nice way to see how the methodology of a non-aggressive art like Aikido gives an example to younger people about how to help each other in a society.

Afternoon classes were a time to see old friends and enjoy the teachings of other local sensei. Three hours of training makes you think of nothing. There are so many techniques and people who are waiting to be uke. This gives you time just to go up, and take tai-sabaki to escape and finish a technique.

So thirty days went by, and we got a Kenshusei diploma and calligraphy from Sensei Germanov, but the main things came from the mental aspect of passing this hard test. We've made friends on the mat and this makes Toyoda Sensei happy. So, thanks to all Tenshinkan students for making us feel like we were at home.

Toyoda Sensei's dreams have come true. Next time more students from Europe and the USA will be there. I hope I will come, and see you on the mat. Special thanks to Mrs. Pat Toyoda and Stephen Toyoda.

Robert Malic is sandan an dojo cho at Eidokan Dojo in Split, Croatia.



What Shugyo Really Means

By Kراسi Lulchev

Over one year ago I started getting ready for this program, emotionally, physically, and financially. Three days before I left I was not sure if I had my visa to come to the United States. Then I found out that we did not have plane tickets but in the end everything was okay. We finally left to come to the U.S., which took twelve hours.

For this program we had a special schedule to follow. We had to attend every class during the day. The morning started with meditation from 6:00 to 7:00 am, and after that, one hour of Aikido, breakfast, cleaning the dojo, grappling, and one hour of calligraphy.

Then lunch and then Aikido training from 1:00 to 2:00. Next, we had free time until 4:00 when Aikido classes started again and we trained until 9:00 pm. This program is perfect for everyone who wants Aikido to be their life. They train us to always be ready, to react quickly in every situation. You learn to do everything with proper etiquette in Shodo, Aikido, and

eating lunch, like the proper way to cut vegetables for lunch, and the correct way to hold the brush for writing calligraphy. All of the things we did had a specific way of order.

Sato Sensei made lunch for us every day and he was a wonderful chef. All of his lunches were great! Every meal was traditional Japanese except for the occasional pizza and Subway sandwiches.

Our Aikido classes covered everything from suburi, kihon waza, henka waza, koshinage, Kumitachi, and Kumijo. Morning Zazen was not only meditation

but Germanov Sensei would ask us a question. Our understanding of his question is what he was looking for. We practiced ki breathing, Kiai Zen (misogi), and other exercises for developing the hara.

In grappling classes we had a chance to practice some different styles of fighting. We learned to fight on the ground.

Our Aikido classes were taught by Sato Sensei and Germanov Sensei most of the time. During the evening we had different but amazing instructors from the AAA to learn from. I had a lot of fun in the kids classes. I learned many new and fun games which I got to play. These games will be remembered and I will add them to my classes when I return home, especially "Sensei Says!"



In calligraphy, Germanov Sensei tried to teach us to use our feelings from Aikido technique, and transfer this feeling to the rice paper with ink. He also taught us to read the energy of the person who wrote the calligraphy. We learn how to write some Zen, and Aikido sayings. This gave us a good start in calligraphy so we can continue to learn

The hardest part of the training at Tenshinkan was all of the heat which made it hard to breath and no air conditioning at night when we slept. All of this was part of the training.

Part of our training was a surprise. Sato Sensei taught classes for the Kenshusei on massage. This class was very good because after a few weeks of training we were all very tight and sore.

At the end of the month Germanov Sensei had a six hour meditation. We had to fight with ourselves and our ego. Each of us had to know himself, to grow, to be stronger, and to see emptiness.

All of us not only know the word shugyo but we now understand and feel what shugyo really means. We were like a big family and we always tried to help each other when ever we could. The most used words were "Hai Sensei". Also the greatest game was "Sensei Says". This game was as fun for me as it was for the kids.

The program was hard but we also had a lot of fun. There were so many experiences during the month that I cannot find the words to describe them all. Whoever wants to know more should come and try.

I hope that we were able to give something to every-

one we trained with. This adventure was well worth my energy and money. I am happy that I was able to come and live here for the month. I would like to thank everyone for being so kind. Special thanks to Germanov Sensei and Sato Sensei who made all of this a reality for me, and for all of the things we learned.

Everything that starts well should end well.

Kراسi Lulchev is nidan at Tendokan in Sofia, Bulgaria.

To Have or To Be...
(Continued from page 5)

in order to survive it is necessary for you to meld your reaction with the other side's, not to push. This is one of the things you learn from Aikido. It teaches you to love, to enjoy life, and everything you have. The pursuit of material welfare destroys the freedom, which you have achieved up until a certain moment. After that you are again burdened with heaps of troubles and stress.

After training and living with people from different countries all over the world, you realize that despite your differences, you share one thing in common; love and devotion to Aikido. Aikido brings kindred souls from around the globe to share in the pleasure from the practice and freedom of Aikido.

Every such course includes Seshin – six hours of Zen meditation. After that test you feel like a whole new person, it seems like you are about to fly, filled with so much energy, free from all thoughts and you want this period of your life to continue a little longer. It's true that when you wake up you don't feel your feet when you take a few steps and the pain is big, but it is deserved.

At the end of the course you start to wonder what the meaning of life is, what is important – to have or to be. What will be of more help to you – to have or to be? Of course it depends on the point of view, which is always based on knowledge and life experience. But when you have at least three to four years of Aikido practice

Humbling Experience...
(Continued from page 6)

few occasions. I hope they believe the same about me, because I felt that showing compassion for my fellow Kenshusei took the focus away from my own pain and problems.

As a result of my own pain experienced during the program, I learned the human body is an amazing machine, capable of a lot more than we think. The key, I found, was mind over matter. Unfortunately, the mind is more difficult to condition than the body. It is so complex, and given a choice, the mind will take the path of least resistance. For example, I knew I would never

and have gone through at least one Kenshusei program you realize that Aikido has helped you find balance between the material and the spiritual in you; between what you want and what the society and the social framework force you to do. Aikido gives you the synchronous and harmony of life and everything that surrounds us. It allows us to become an entity with the surrounding environment, and to evaluate and make conclusions, and to do something to make our life better in quality.

And at the end I'll leave it to you to decide if it's worthy to try Aikido practice and the Kenshusei program. I'll try my best to come here at least once again. My participation in this event is an opportunity to experience the freedom and joy of doing what I want the most – to practice Aikido. From one passionate admirer of Aikido, who trains with pleasure and finds in Aikido everything that cannot be taken from society – freedom, energy and a greater willingness to live. Just the satisfaction of training can not be explained in one article.

I wrote these few sentences to express my gratitude for everything – for the opportunity to be here, to train with people from other countries and to improve my Aikido.

Thanks to the Toyoda family, Andrew Sato Sensei, Ed Germanov Sensei and the others with whom I trained these thirty days.

Daniela Petkova is nidan in Bulgaria.

leave the program early, but it was very difficult to convince my mind to live for each moment of the experience. It felt separated from my body, like another entity. So, my mind would often make negotiations like, "just 20 more minutes," "only 15 days," or something similar. I mean, I entered this program, and this was my internal conflict. Ultimately, I discovered that when I lived fully and consciously in the moment, time quickly disappeared. I remember preparing for the last of our six hour sesshin meditation, thinking, this is my breaking point. I am going to fold over in pain and draw disapproving stares from the others. However, I had found my center in the stillness, and the last

Month of Surprises...
(Continued from page 6)

different classes Germanov Sensei taught made our Aikido better and our lives more complete.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to train with so many great sensei. They all had wonderful things to offer for Aikido and my life. Things like always be ready, have patience, concentrate, and look.

In Chicago I was honored to finally meet the Toyoda family. I never had the chance to meet Toyoda Sensei but I know he was a person with an amazing spirit.

Not to leave out lunch. Every day Sato Sensei made lunch for us. It was always a traditional Japanese meal. I never thought someone would ever teach me to eat with chop sticks. During lunch we had to learn proper etiquette. You had to wait to start eating until Sensei was ready and you had to be aware of his timing so you would finish the same time and not before. For this we had to be patient and focus.

It was also very interesting to watch the other Martial Arts at Tenshinkan dojo--Kempo, Iaido, Kendo, Ninjutsu, and others. The different styles and ways of thinking were very interesting for me.

My time here in Chicago was an experience that I will have for my whole life. I want to thank Germanov Sensei for letting me come and thanks to Sato Sensei for allowing me to stay and train at Tenshinkan dojo. This is a place with a lot of tradition and honor.

Kiril Dimitrov Tashev is 1st kyu at Tendokan in Sofia, Bulgaria.

hour was surprisingly the easiest of the six.

The lesson I cherish the most was the humbling experience. It is very difficult to commit oneself to a lifestyle that is well outside the comfort zone, especially when it involves service to others. After my first night of training, I approached Germanov Sensei and Sato Sensei and asked if they would like a cup of water. Sato Sensei corrected me immediately, saying something like, "if your aim is to

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Warrior Way...

(Continued from page 5)

ters that can describe your health through seeing just one diagonal you did), when cleaning the dojo, when we practice or in the relations between all of the Kenshusei. We can see our thoughts in our Zen practice. We can see our behavior in the words of our teachers. And last but not least, in our Zen practice we can discover that we are quite more than just our ego.

All this has brought me the awareness I needed. My feeling is that thoughts of awareness will rise long after the course finishes. As our mind is still too small to accept so quickly the knowledge built through centuries and all the wisdom that came in our heads during the different kind of practices. But really, the good side is that it has started.

I could have seen my threats, wrong habits, lack of compassion, difficulty to be here and now, “the game” of the ego. But what has been even better is that we saw where we wanted to go – the masters from which we can learn. Otherwise how do we know what is good or bad, which is the right attitude toward life and which not? It is their daily practice in and out of the dojo that guides us.

It cannot be skipped the attitude of Sato Sensei, who made us lunch every day (and dinner on Monday) with such a pleasurable and positive attitude...or how he was constantly giving us something – attitude, advice, a ride somewhere, some little present, support, etc. without expecting anything in return (which I see as a practice of the universal love). At the same time he was setting strict tasks/rules for the Kenshusei, which are up to the point and more surprisingly (at least I've felt it like this) without any participation of his ego – just clean and strict tasks. It can seem very easy but once we try, we understand how much we have to learn still.

Additionally, Germanov Sensei pushed us, which prepared us to respond to the sometimes brutal outside world where we do not have lots of possibilities for mistakes. By pushing us, he showed us that we can overcome our barriers by taking all the best from us. For instance, few Kenshusei believed we could do six hours of meditation, but we did it. Very tough practice but it showed us that we and our spirit are masters of ourselves. We overcame one whole month of tough everyday trainings. And this gives us the power to believe that we are the masters of our life.

Last but not least the relations between the people training in Aikido who are masters themselves. After every class we bow to each other and we thank our partners as they help us to become stronger physically and spiritually and more skillful. At the same time they save us. It has to be our mission to spread this attitude all around us where we work and live.

Receiving awareness and navigation and having the daily tough practice we have had the possibility to close the cycle of education. And this is the great power of this Kenshusei course. It develops body, mind, and spirit by showing us the practice, principles and masters. And all this happens in the atmosphere of Kenshusei centered in Aikido principles, with whom I have been very happy to get acquainted and very glad that we became such friends and a supportive community. We went through the tough practice and shugyo together, which develops us, through our internal victories as well as the great entertaining moments we have had.

This is our one month story. It is my personal view on it and I believe it describes our experience as accurately as possible.

Peter G. is 6th kyu at Tendokan in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Humbling Experience...

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help others, you should do so without question or need of recognition.” As a result, I was given the responsibility to fill the water jug before the evening classes for the rest of the month. This experience helped me to understand that the self just gets in the way of all aspects of one's training. There is certainly a reason we all train together in Aikido. Sure, dan tests and seminars showcase the accomplishments of a few, but the community is always most important. Training for the greater good of all produces a trickle-down effect that positively affects all. That is why our teachers say a kyu test is a test for the entire dojo.

One of the ways I was humbled involved kihon technique. Sensei Dianne Costanzo said to the class one day, “if you have no interest in consistently working kihon technique, then you should leave.” I took this advice seriously, for at the moment

she gave it, I was complaining internally about the repetition of basic technique in the program.

Above all, my experience will have little significance on the future of Tenshinkan. I am only a visitor, and this dojo will be here long after I leave this Earth. I believe that its legacy will live on forever, especially in the hearts and minds of future generations. I imagine Tenshinkan dojo like the first time I saw the Sears Tower up close, driving down Michigan Avenue. From a distance, I had one picture, created by imagination or hearsay. Inside, however, there is always a different story. Sometimes it is never told, or left out of conversation, because the experience, like I said, is so difficult to describe. So, I can only say with certainty that the experience in Tenshinkan, the memories, and the lessons learned, will resonate forever in every cell of my body, heart, and soul.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to my program instructors, Ed Germanov and Andy Sato. Germanov Sensei is one of the most passionate warriors of our time. He is a fierce fighter, a powerful and innovative Aikidoist, a dedicated meditator, and an erudite calligrapher. He commands sincere balance, and I praise and thank him for the lessons learned. Sato Sensei is also a man of great balance. In every movement, he is carrying forward not only the legacy of Toyoda Shihan, but also the spirit of a forgotten age. I feel it each time he reverently whispers, “Thank you, Sensei,” at the end of every class. His sincerity pours out, on and off the mat, and especially in the kitchen where he prepares savory and authentic Japanese cuisine. I admire both men, and their dedication to learn, grow, and get better and better at what they truly love so much.

Robbie McCullough is 2nd kyu at Banshinkan in Broomall, PA.

The daily itinerary...
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2:00-4:00: Dojo maintenance or afternoon break



4:00-5:45: Children's/Teen Aikido



5:45-9:15: Aikido



9:15: Dinner